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How Can Schools Support Parents' Engagement in their Children's Learning? Evidence from Research and Practice

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Education Endowment Foundation

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The EEF Guidance Report ***Working with Parents to Support Children's Learning*** is available at:

https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/tools/guidance-reports/working-with-parents-to-support-childrens-learning.

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Local advisory panel: Professor Charles DesForges (University of Exeter), Professor Katrina Wyatt (University of Exeter), Roy Broadfield (specialist in parent engagement), Tania Beard (Headteacher, St. Martin's C of E Primary and Nursery School, Cranbrook) and Laura Webb (Teaching Schools Manager, Jurassic Coast Teaching Schools' Alliance).

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

This report provides a review of international evidence regarding parent engagement in children's learning and investigates what schools in England are doing currently to promote parent engagement in children's learning. Parent engagement here refers to parents' participation in supporting their child's learning (academic attainment,[1] related learning outcomes[2] and behaviour), whether at home, in school or via home-school connections and wider community collaborations (Harris and Goodall 2007).

The importance of parent engagement in children's learning is widely acknowledged (e.g. Goodall 2017), indeed the evidence suggests that it has many benefits, such as improvements in literacy and maths skills (Van Voorhis et al. 2013), better school attendance (McConnell and Kubina 2014) and closure of the achievement gap (Goodall 2017). A review published over 15 years ago (Desforges and Abouchaar 2003) found that parental involvement at home had a significant positive effect on children's achievement after adjusting for other factors influencing attainment. The authors concluded that in the primary school age range the impact on achievement caused by parental involvement was larger than differences associated with variations in the quality of schools. Furthermore, the scale of this impact was evident across all ethnic groups and social classes.

The home learning environment (HLE) is a significant way in which parents engage with children's learning. It reflects the physical home environment and interactions with family members in and around the home (Smees and Sammons 2016). Research on the early years HLE tends to focus on educational or developmentally stimulating parent-child activities, such as reading to a child, playing with letters or numbers, drawing and painting and learning rhymes and songs. It also covers the presence in the home of material learning resources such as books, puzzles and toys. As children get older, there is a greater focus on activities such as enrichment outings, computer use for educational purposes, independent reading and parents talking to their children about school work. Longitudinal studies in the UK show that the quality of the HLE before children attend school not only predicts school readiness outcomes, including language and communication and social-emotional skills, but also has a continuing effect on educational performance in primary and secondary school (up to age 18 years) (e.g. Sylva et al. 2004; Melhuish et al. 2008; Melhuish 2010; Sammons et al. 2015a). In addition, some aspects of the HLE in middle childhood and adolescence contribute to outcomes in secondary school, including GCSE performance, although critically this does not remove the effects of parent support in the early years (Sammons et al. 2015b). Importantly, these effects are net of predictors such as income, family socio-economic status (SES) and parents' own qualification levels, a point summed up neatly by Sylva et al. (2004): "What parents do is more important than who they are" (p.70).

That said, socio-economic background unsurprisingly affects learning outcomes in children, with low SES parents facing many barriers to involvement in their children's learning (Harris and Goodall 2007). Nechyba et al. (1999) suggested three possible mechanisms through

[1] Referring to formal test, exams, grades or other measures of knowledge or skills.
[2] Including attendance, engagement with school, motivation and attitude to learning.

which social class might operate as a barrier to parental involvement. First is the suggestion that there is a 'culture of poverty' in which working class families place less value on education than middle class parents and hence are less predisposed to participate. Second, families from more disadvantaged background often have less 'social capital' in terms of social networks and skills and thus are, or feel, less well-equipped to negotiate and deliver on the demands of schooling. Third, such parents face certain institutional barriers inasmuch as schools are middle class institutions with their own values to which all must conform. While there is a broadly held desire amongst parents for more involvement in schooling there are clearly material (time and money) and psychological barriers which operate differentially (and discriminatingly) across the social classes and individual differences amongst parents that operate within social classes.

Certainly there is evidence of a socio-economic gradient to parents' engagement in their children's learning and the HLE. Specifically, children from advantaged homes typically receive more enriched home learning, are read to more, hear more words, have more books, and are taken on more out-of-home activities; in contrast, children in more chaotic households or experiencing high levels of risk have poorer outcomes (e.g. Kelly et al. 2011) and receive poorer quality home learning (e.g. Vernon-Feagans et al. 2012). As Smees and Sammons (2016) acknowledge, "It is not surprising that risks such as maternal depression, maternal basic skills, and violence within the home impact on the kind of home learning environment experienced" (p.2). Nevertheless, the evidence suggests that disadvantaged parents *can* become more engaged with their children with support and that this engagement leads to better outcomes (Van Voorhis et al. 2013).

Although the benefits of parent engagement in children's learning are widely acknowledged, systematic reviews of evidence on interventions to improve attainment and other learning outcomes via supporting parent engagement have shown mixed results (e.g. See and Gorard 2015b). This has stimulated an ongoing debate about the extent to which schools can promote parent engagement such that it improves child outcomes, in large part owing to differences about methodology (e.g. Goldstein et al. 2018; See and Gorard 2018). Moreover, the most recent systematic reviews in the field were conducted over five years ago (e.g. Jeynes 2012; Gorard and See 2013), and with some exceptions (e.g. Campbell 2011) little is known about what schools in England do currently in order to support parents' engagement in their children's learning, including for low SES parents (who are typically less involved).

In this context, the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) commissioned a team from the University of Plymouth and the University of Exeter to conduct (1) a review of the best available evidence about what schools can do to improve children's learning and attainment via parent engagement, and (2) supplementary research to understand schools' current practices and perceptions of parental engagement. Given the focus of the EEF on closing the attainment gap there was particular interest in how best to support parents from more disadvantaged backgrounds. The review summarises the best available international research evidence on parent engagement and presents actionable recommendations for practice that could be incorporated in EEF guidance. EEF guidance reports, which hitherto

have covered subjects such as maths, literacy and meta-cognition,[3] are based on rigorous reviews of research evidence and are produced in collaboration with topic experts and practitioners.

From a policy and practice perspective the study is important because in 2010 the Schools White Paper for England outlined the Government's strategy to raise the attainment of disadvantaged children and narrow the achievement gap (Department for Education 2010). It is thought that parent engagement can lead to better outcomes for children but despite a number of reviews since the White Paper in 2010, the mechanisms for engaging parents with their children's learning remain unknown.

The remainder of this chapter outlines the focus of the study described in this report, the underpinning conceptual framework and the broad approach taken.

Focus of the study

The study has two main parts. The first of these, an evidence review, aims to synthesise the best current international evidence on parental engagement in children's learning, focusing on:

(a) effective parenting practices (including styles and activities) associated with positive learning outcomes at different stages of children's development [referred to as 1a]
(b) activities[4] delivered in or by schools and early years settings that promote and support these practices, particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds [referred to as 1b].

The focus is on supporting improvements in children's *academic attainment* and *related learning outcomes*, supplemented by other child outcomes known to impact on learning (notably behaviour) and the outcome of parent engagement in children's learning itself. The review covers early years to secondary school (3-16 years). Although children with special educational needs (SEN) are not the focus, the review method allows any effective practices for this group to be identified.

EEF advised that since there is reasonably good evidence on the first of the questions stated above (question 1a), particularly among younger children, but less high quality evidence on the latter (question 1b), the review team should spend more time on the second question (1b). It also requested that the review should assess the strength of existing studies, indicating that in relation to activities designed to increase parent engagement and children's attainment, other learning outcomes and behaviour (question 1b) it was most interested in robust, causal evidence of impact using experimental and quasi-experimental designs. Studies could be carried out both in the UK and internationally. The review also needed to highlight any evidence suggesting that certain practices are ineffective, and gaps in the evidence base where more research is needed. Finally, the review needed to be completed using an approach that allows it to be easily updated in the future, since EEF guidance reports are "live" documents that get updated as the evidence base evolves.

[3] https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/tools/guidance-reports/
[4] Includes programmes, practices, structures and processes.

The second part of the study, which involved the survey of schools and interviews with school leaders, sought to identify what schools in England are doing currently to support parental engagement. This element is designed to help understand how far schools are currently prioritising parental engagement, what types of approaches they adopt, how they target their efforts, and how far practice matches the best available evidence as shown in the evidence review. The intention was to identify areas where there is potential for shifting practice towards more evidence-based approaches, and to inform possible resources that could be developed to support schools.

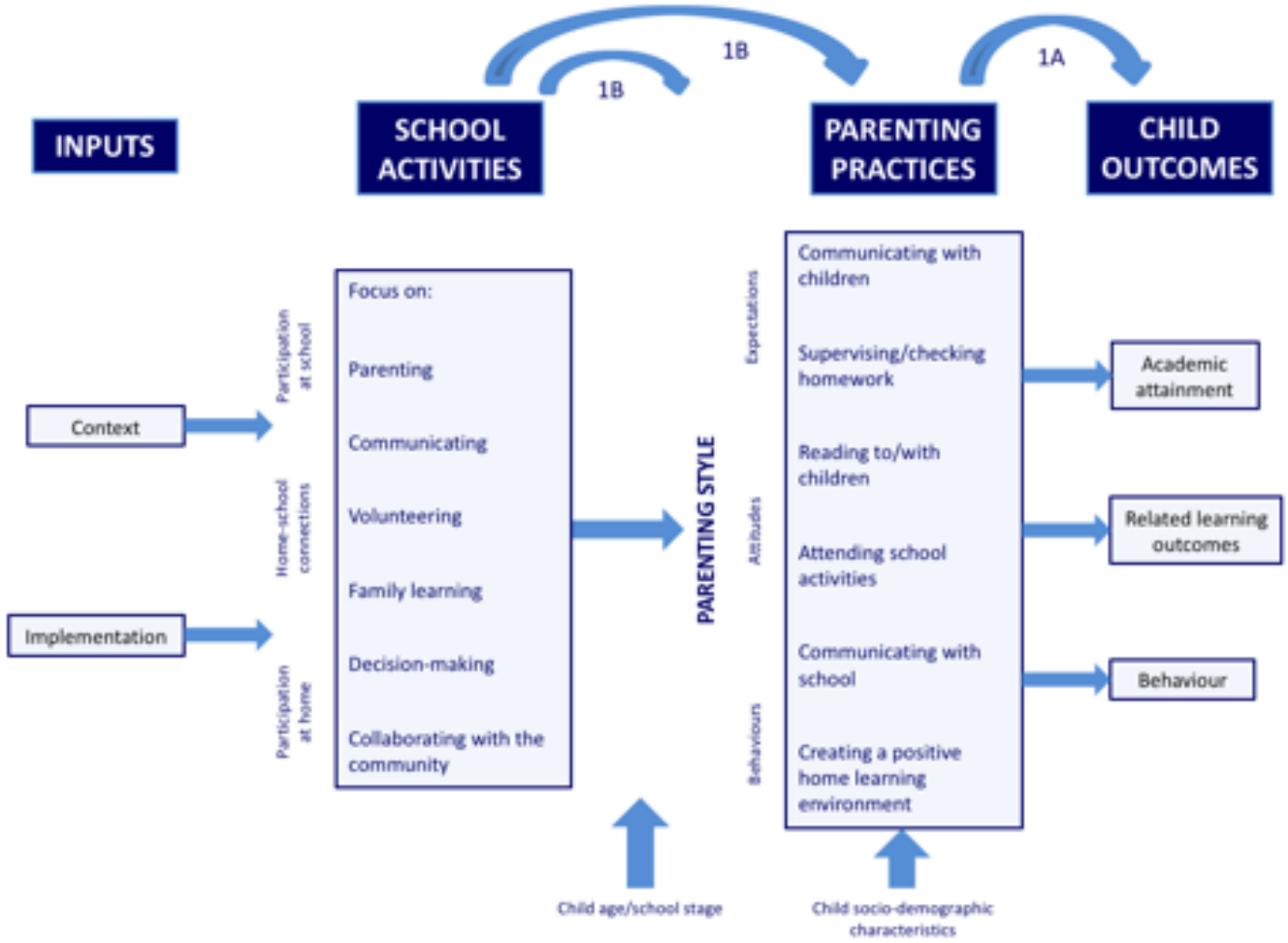
Conceptual framework

In order to ensure that the study was focused and to help organise the results, a simple conceptual model was developed (Figure 1.1). This shows that the principal outcome of interest is children's academic attainment (e.g. formal tests, exams, grades or other measures of knowledge and skills) but also of interest are related child learning outcomes (e.g. attendance, engagement with school, motivation, attitude to learning) and behaviour, both of which have a bearing on attainment. Drawing on a range of studies (e.g. Epstein 2001; Harris and Goodall 2007; Goodall and Vorhaus 2011), parenting practices that potentially contribute to children's learning are categorised in terms of communicating with children, supervising or checking homework, attending school activities, communicating with the school and creating a positive home learning environment. Running across all of these is parenting style, which encompasses parenting behaviours, attitudes and expectations. School activities designed to promote parent involvement in children's learning are organised according to the six categories developed by Epstein (2001):

1. *parenting* (e.g. assisting families with setting home conditions to support children as students);
2. *communicating* (e.g. informing parents about school activities and children's progress);
3. *volunteering* (e.g. organising volunteers to support school activities);
4. *learning at home* (e.g. involving parents in homework and other curriculum-related activities and decisions);
5. *decision-making* (e.g. including families in school decisions); and
6. *collaborating with the community* (e.g. coordinating services and resources from the community for families).

These activities may concern parental involvement at home, or in the school, or in home-school collaborations whereby schools work with parents or engage parents in school work (e.g. homework activities that involve parents and children working together, or inviting parents to volunteer in school activities). Inputs include the context, implementation of the school activities and the nature and quality of relationships between the school/teachers and parents. Potential moderating factors of the relationship between school activities and parent or child outcomes include stage of schooling (early years, primary, secondary) and child socio-demographic characteristics.

Figure 1.1: Conceptual framework for the study



Approach to the study

Members of the study team met with the EEF and an advisory panel at the start of the project to agree a set of focused questions (Appendix A), the answers to which would help to inform recommendations for practice and areas of promise. Following this, the study proceeded with two parallel strands (further detail is provided in Chapter 2).

The evidence review included identifying systematic reviews and meta-analyses published from 2013 (when the most recent extensive systematic reviews in this subject area were conducted) relevant to questions 1a and 1b above. In the case of question 1b, relevant primary studies – randomised controlled trials (RCTs) and quasi-experimental design (QED) studies – not included in the systematic reviews were also identified.

In order to ascertain current parent engagement practice in schools in England an online quota survey was conducted, focusing on existing policies, procedures and activities and how respondents thought schools could better support parents. This was supplemented by telephone interviews with a subset of school leaders who responded to the survey, which explored in more depth issues such as the barriers for schools in building relationships with parents and resources that schools need to support this kind of work. Three interviews were also conducted with academic experts in order to obtain their perspective on the nature and quality of existing practice.

Findings from both parts of the study were used to inform the development of a guidance report produced and disseminated by the EEF for schools in England (van Poortlviet et al. 2018).

Organisation of the report

Chapter 2 describes the methods used for the three respective parts of the study, namely the evidence review, the survey of schools in England and interviews with school leaders and academic experts. Chapter 3 presents results from the first part of the evidence review (question 1a), focusing on the relationship between parent engagement and children's attainment and learning. Chapter 4 sets out what is known about the effectiveness of interventions to promote parent engagement in children's learning, based on the second part of the evidence review (question 1b) and covering both systematic reviews and more recent primary studies. Chapter 5 describes results from the survey of schools in England and interviews with school leaders and academic experts to give both quantitative and qualitative insights into what schools do currently to support parents' engagement in their children's learning. Finally, Chapter 6 sets out conclusions and implications regarding parent engagement for education policy and, most importantly, practice in schools.

Summary of key points

Although the benefits of parent engagement in children's learning are widely acknowledged, in particular as manifested in the home learning environment, systematic reviews of evidence on interventions to improve attainment and other learning outcomes via supporting parent engagement have shown mixed results.

The research described in this report involved:

- a review of the best available international evidence about what schools can do to improve children's attainment, other learning outcomes and behaviour via parent engagement; and
- supplementary research to understand the current practices and perceptions of parental engagement in schools in England.

Given the focus of the EEF on closing the attainment gap there was particular interest in how best to support parents from more disadvantaged backgrounds.

Findings from both parts of the study were used to inform the development of a guidance report produced and disseminated by the EEF for schools in England.

Chapter 2: Methods

Introduction

At the start of the study the research team met with the EEF and an advisory panel convened by the EEF comprising a mixture of academic experts, head teachers and specialists in parent engagement to agree the focus and parameters of the review. This generated a series of focused questions (Appendix A) for the study to explore. These related to the overarching questions set out in Chapter 1 but went into more detail. This chapter describes the three connected methods used in order to help answer the focused questions, namely an evidence review, a survey of school leaders and interviews with school leaders and subject experts.

Evidence review

The evidence review sought to address two overarching questions, namely the association between parenting practices and children's academic attainment and related learning outcomes (referred to as 1a) and the effectiveness of school-based or school-led interventions in terms of increasing parental engagement and children's academic attainment and related learning outcomes (1b). The rapid review used defined systematic review methods and followed recommendations laid out in the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) statement (Moher et al. 2009). The review followed an *a priori* design, which is available on the project webpage.[5]

Eligibility criteria

Documents meeting the following criteria were included.

Population

Parents or caregivers of children aged 3-16

Interventions

Any interventions delivered in or by preschools or schools that are designed to promote parental engagement or support parenting practices associated with positive learning outcomes in the school or home setting (research question 1b). The review also considered evidence that demonstrates the impact of parenting practices on learning outcomes, that may be measured outside of intervention studies seeking to improve such practices (research question 1a).

Outcomes

Any learning outcomes including school readiness, academic attainment (e.g. formal tests, exams, grades and other measures of knowledge and skills) or related learning outcomes (e.g. attendance, engagement with school life, motivation, attitudes to learning, behaviour). Parent engagement outcomes (e.g. communicating with children, creating a positive home learning environment, attending school activities) were also included for studies relevant to research question 1b.

[5] http://clahrc-peninsula.nihr.ac.uk/research/engaging-parents-in-childrens-learning

Study type
Systematic reviews for both research questions, supplemented with RCTs and QED studies that (i) focus on the impact of activities and interventions (research question 1b) and (ii) are not found in the included systematic reviews.

Identifying the evidence
The databases ERIC, Education Research Complete and the British Education Index (via EBSCOhost), the Australian Education Index and ASSIA (via ProQuest), Scopus, PsycINFO (via OvidSp), Social Policy and Practice (via OvidSp), Social Science Citation Index (via Web of Science) and ProQuest dissertations were searched on 19th and 20th December 2017 for studies meeting the inclusion criteria. The database searches were designed and run by an information specialist (MR). The search combined terms for parents, parental involvement, education/school terms, and terms for learning/learning activities. Search filters for study design (systematic reviews and controlled trials) were used and adapted where appropriate. The searches were limited by publication date from 2013, which was when the most recent extensive systematic reviews in this area were carried out.

Further database searches were carried out on British Education Database (via EBSCOhost), ERIC (via EBSCOhost) and Social Policy and Practice (via OvidSp) combining terms for parent involvement and learning outcomes/activities, terms for surveys, questionnaires, interviews and case studies, and terms for UK cities and schools in order to identify grey literature reports focusing on UK schools.

All database search strategies are provided in Appendix B.

Citation searching (forwards to identify more recent studies citing an article and backwards to consider the reference lists of included articles) was carried out for key systematic reviews or primary studies found during the database searches. Content lists of key journals identified during the searches publishing widely in this topic area were hand-searched.

Grey literature was sought initially through databases. However, websites of the following pertinent organisations were also searched for relevant documents: EEF; Special Schools and Academy Trust; National College for Teaching and Leadership; PTA UK [now Parentkind]; and education authorities.

Study selection
References were all uploaded to reference management software (Endnote X8.2) and duplicate studies were removed. Titles and abstracts were screened by two reviewers independently (a combination of NA, VB, JL, MR, AH and KB). Full texts were retrieved for included titles and were also screened by two reviewers (as above). Discrepancies were resolved by a third reviewer where necessary.

Included studies
The PRISMA flow diagram (Liberati et al. 2009) shows the review process from initial search through screening to data extraction (Figure 2.1), and includes the reason for exclusion of each full text paper. For question 1a, we identified 11 relevant reviews and reviewed the

seven that were deemed to be most relevant.[6] For question 1b we identified 10 relevant reviews and reviewed the nine that were most relevant (this includes an extended review that summarised three of the others).[7]

As the number of primary studies identified for question 1b and not included in the systematic reviews (n=71) exceeded our capacity to review, studies were prioritised for review according to their focus, design and quality (Table 2.1). We focused on reviewing studies that fell into the grey-shaded cells. We were able to review all priority 1 and 2 studies that were published in peer-reviewed journals (n=47). We also identified 13 relevant dissertations and categorised them in the same way with the intention of reviewing any priority 1 dissertations (in the event none were located). Thus, no primary studies in the priority 3 category were reviewed (n=23). Our judgement is that this omission will not have had a significant bearing on the results, particularly for academic outcomes, but a future study could review the additional studies to assess this.

Table 2.1: Prioritisation of primary studies for question 1b

Priority	*Focus*	*Exceptions*
1 (top)	RCT with academic outcomes	Very poor study,[8] and/or Very small study,[9] and/or Parent element very small[10]
2	Studies that are neither 1 nor 3 - effectively: • QED with academic outcome; and • RCT/QED where outcomes include other learning outcomes and/or parent engagement (but not academic)	Very poor study, and/or Very small study, and/or Parent element very small
3 (bottom)	Main focus is behaviour / parenting (can be RCT or QED)	Exceptions from priority categories 1 and 2 become priority 3

[6] The EEF advised at the outset that since more is known about this element the review should be weighted instead towards question 1b. The 1a studies that were not reviewed for this study are cited in the References section of this report and were deemed less worthy of attention for various reasons, including the target group not being relevant in a UK context and a focus on tangentially related concepts such as cultural capital and school belonging.

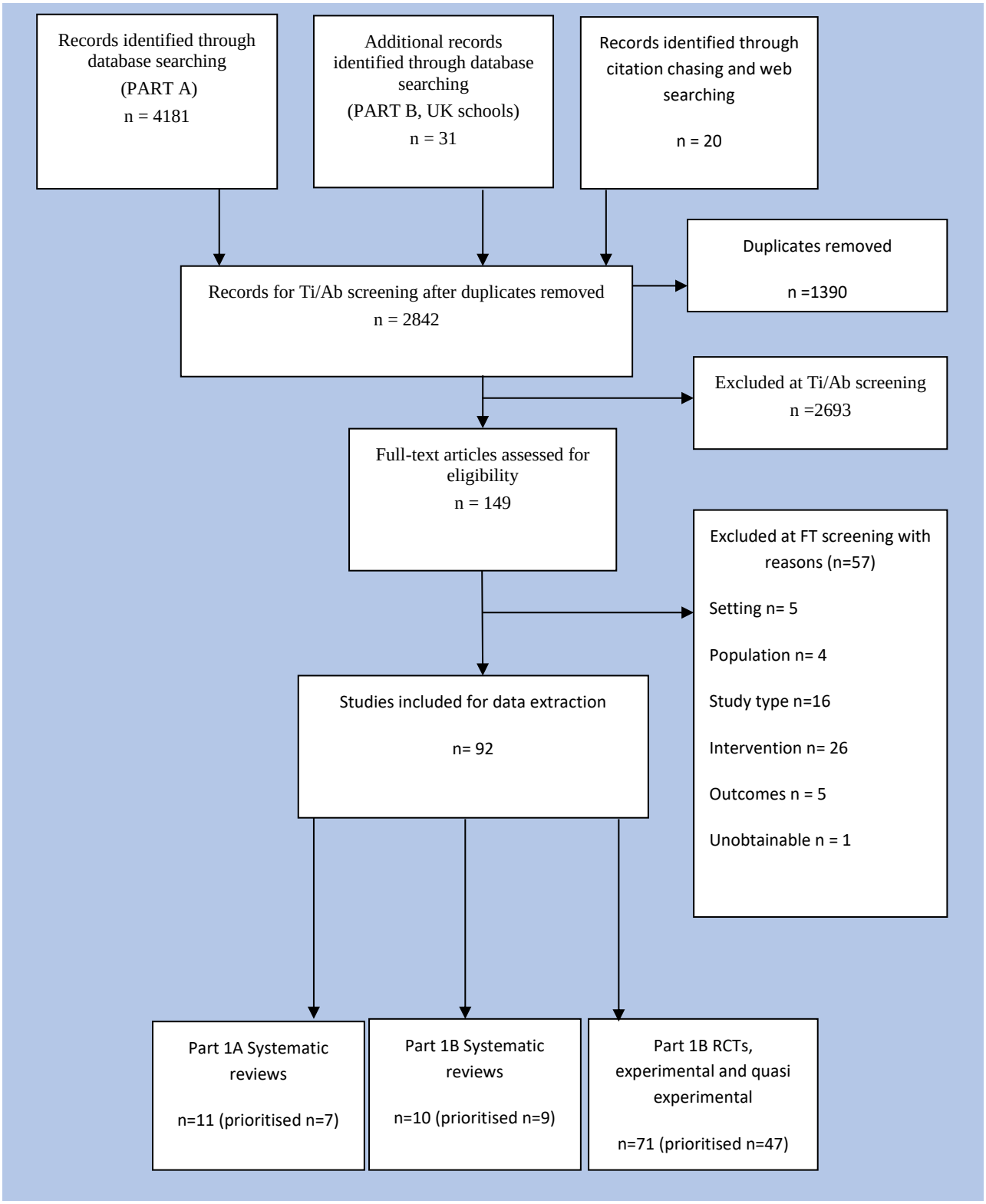
[7] The review that was not examined in detail focused on school-based mental health services.

[8] A study which, based on a *prima facie* assessment, was considered likely to be given a low score on the critical appraisal criteria.

[9] A study where the number of participants was <40 (or ≤3 clusters), or where the focus was on a sub-sample of a larger study.

[10] A study where the parent engagement element was essentially tangential to the intervention that was evaluated.

Figure 2.1: PRISMA flow diagram



Data extraction

Data extraction forms were developed separately for the two types of systematic review (those pertaining to questions 1a and 1b respectively) and the RCT/QED studies. The data

extraction categories and critical appraisal criteria applied in both cases are provided in Appendix C.

In brief, each systematic review data extraction and critical appraisal form contained the following five sections.

First was a summary of the study, covering the type and aim of review and inclusion and exclusion criteria (e.g. study type, target group, intervention type).

Second, the content of the study was described in terms of number and type of studies included, and the countries where they were conducted. For the 1a reviews, additional data were extracted for the type of parent activity (e.g. reading with children, creative a positive home learning environment, communicating with the school), whereas for the 1b reviews additional information was gathered on the nature of the interventions reviewed (e.g. target group, setting, content, duration, implementers), their theoretical underpinning and education phase (early years, primary, secondary) and their fit in the Epstein typology outlined in Chapter 1.

Third, the quality of studies was critically appraised (see below for the main criteria).

Fourth, study results were summarised in narrative form, distinguishing between academic attainment, related child learning outcomes, child behaviour and, in the case of 1b reviews, parent engagement. Evidence from moderator or sub-group analyses and author conclusions were also captured.

Fifth, other relevant information was collected. For 1a reviews this covered how parent engagement was defined and measured, and for 1b reviews it included how best to engage families with particular needs and messages on context and effective implementation (including implementer skills, training and experience). In both cases author research recommendations were recorded.

The same broad structure was used for data extraction forms for primary studies relevant to question 1b, but with slightly more detail about the nature of the interventions evaluated and necessarily different critical appraisal criteria (see below for the criteria).

All data extraction and critical appraisal was undertaken by one reviewer (KB or AH), both of whom had prior experience of undertaking reviews and received written guidance and rapid feedback (from NA) on early reviews. Completed reviews were checked by another independent reviewer (NA or VB). It was planned that disagreements would be resolved with a third independent reviewer, although in the event this was not necessary.

Critical appraisal

The quality of included studies was appraised using a bespoke tool based on widely used resources developed by the Centre for Evidence-based Medicine and Critical Appraisal Skills Programme.[11] In the case of the systematic reviews, the following criteria were used:

- Addressed clearly focused question
- *A priori* design reported
- Conducted comprehensive literature search
- Undertook duplicate study selection and data extraction
- Included studies regardless of publication type
- Provided list of studies included/excluded
- Provided characteristics of included studies
- Assessed scientific quality of studies
- Scientific quality of studies used appropriately in formulating conclusions
- Methods used to combine results were appropriate
- Assessed likelihood of publication bias

Criteria for the RCT/QED studies were as follows:

- Addresses clearly focused issue
- Adequately powered to detect difference in primary outcome
- Randomisation method specified and valid
- Allocation concealment adequate
- Baseline data collected before random allocation
- Baseline equal or differences in baseline accounted for
- All participants accounted for
- Groups treated equally apart from intervention
- Data collectors blind to treatment
- Intention to treat (ITT) analysis used[12]
- Total attrition less than 10%
- No differential attrition between intervention and comparator groups

Synthesis

A narrative synthesis is provided for all systematic reviews and primary studies in Chapters 3 and 4 respectively. In the case of question 1b this covers both intervention effectiveness and aspects of implementation. The heterogeneity of the primary studies identified for question 1b means that a meta-analysis was not suitable, but wherever possible for those studies we have calculated effect sizes in a consistent manner – or where necessary relied on those reported (also Chapter 4). Quantitative analyses of the critical appraisal criteria for all systematic reviews and primary studies are also provided in Chapters 3 and 4.

Survey

Using the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter 1, we constructed a brief online survey to gather responses from school leaders about activities in their schools designed to support

[11] For details see https://www.cebm.net/2014/06/critical-appraisal/ and https://casp-uk.net/casp-tools-checklists/.

[12] ITT analysis means that trial data are analysed based on the initial treatment assignment and not on the treatment eventually received.

parents' engagement with their children's learning. The survey used four quota criteria to ensure a sample of schools from different regions, school types (the EEF requested a focus on state-funded and/or maintained schools), phases of education and rural and urban areas. The target for each quota is displayed in the tables in Chapter 5. Ethical approval for the survey data collection was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Plymouth Faculty of Health and Human Sciences and Peninsula Schools of Medicine and Dentistry (Ref: 17/18-891).

Population and sampling frame

At the time of the survey there were 24,281 schools in England, including 16,786 primary schools and 3,408 secondary schools. Our sampling frame included all schools in 20 randomly selected local authorities across the nine regions of England, for which the Department of Education was able to provide contact details (5,696 schools in total). We aimed to achieve 250 responses to the survey. At a 95% confidence level, this would give us a reasonable margin of error (confidence interval): +/-6% for a conservative 50% response to questions about parent engagement.

Procedure

An invitation was sent to the main email address held by the Department for Education for every school in the sampling frame on 5th March 2018. The email contained a brief introduction to the study and a link to the online survey, and attached the participant's study information form with detailed information about the survey and its purpose. Once participants accessed the online survey, they were first asked to read the information sheet and required to check a box indicating that they consented to take part in the research.

The online survey, a copy of which may be found on the project website,[13] comprised four sections, with a total of 27 questions. These focused, respectively, on:

1. demographic questions about the school
2. the schools' policies and procedures on parent engagement
3. the type of activities the schools use to support parents' engagement in children's learning (organised according to the Epstein typology)
4. respondents' views on what could be done and what inputs are needed to better support parents' engagement.

Respondents who completed the survey were also invited to enter their school into a lottery draw for a £500 voucher. If they wished to do so, they entered their contact details; once a winner was drawn all contact details were destroyed.

A reminder email was sent to all schools that did not have a completed response after two weeks of the survey being active. A second targeted reminder email was sent a week later to secondary schools, early years' institutions, and schools in regions with a poor response rate to help improve the representativeness of the sample. The survey was closed on 23rd April 2018.

[13] http://clahrc-peninsula.nihr.ac.uk/research/engaging-parents-in-childrens-learning

Results from the survey were analysed quantitatively, with results presented in Chapter 5. We also conducted a supplementary analysis of interventions listed by survey respondents, focusing on their nature and the strength of evidence for their effectiveness. This consisted of searching for evaluations of the interventions listed and then determining (i) whether they included an RCT or QED study and, if so, (ii) whether the intervention had been found by the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) to reach Level 3 or above according to its standards of evidence, and (iii) if not, whether the intervention had (a) been assessed by the EIF and found not to reach Level 3 or (b) *not* been assessed by the EEF but had a positive impact suggesting that it could potentially reach Level 3.[14]

Interviews

Sampling and recruitment

Just over half (53%: 79/150) of survey participants indicated their willingness to be interviewed, of which 16 were purposely sampled to achieve a range of education phases, regions, locations, school categories, Ofsted ratings and deprivation levels. Emails were sent directly to the named contact in order to arrange a telephone interview. In addition, four subject experts identified in collaboration with the EEF advisory panel were identified and approached by email to ascertain their willingness to be interviewed. The purpose of these interviews was to obtain their perspectives on the research questions. All four experts agreed to be interviewed, although in the event it was only possible to complete three interviews.

Procedures

The majority of interviews with school leaders were carried out by JM, who received half a day's training from JL. JM is a former secondary school teacher and has conducted both telephone and face-to-face interviews with teachers on previous research projects.

A consent form (Appendix D) was emailed to the participant in advance of the interview to be signed electronically and returned via email to the research team. Just prior to the interview, the participant was emailed his/her survey responses so that he or she could refer to them during the interview and clarify any particular points. Interviews were typed up in note form (not verbatim and not recorded) under each section of the Topic Guide (see Appendix E). Telephone interviews with subject experts were conducted by JL and NA, who also typed up notes of the calls.

Analysis

In order to identify patterns and meaning in the data, notes of the interviews with school leaders were analysed thematically (Braun and Clarke 2006) in relation to the following focused research questions:

- What are school in England typically doing to engage parents in children's learning and why?
- Do they undertake particular activities aimed at parents of children from disadvantaged backgrounds?

[14] http://guidebook.eif.org.uk/eif-evidence-standards

- What are the barriers for schools in building relationships with parents and engaging them in children's learning?
- What resources do schools need to support efforts to build relationships with parents and engage parents in their child's learning?
- Do schools evaluate their activity to engage parents in children's learning, and if so how?
- Is there any evidence linking schools' parent engagement strategy to outcomes (especially attainment)?

Analysis of the interviews with subject experts informed our interpretation of all study findings and their implications for policy, practice and research.

Agreeing messages for practice

In order to agree key messages to inform the EEF guidance based on the evidence review, survey and interviews, two members of the research team (NA and JL) met with the EEF advisory panel on two separate occasions approximately one month apart. The EEF and the research team drafted guidance following these meetings and shared it with the group for comment. These discussions and the final EEF guidance (van Poortlviet et al. 2018) informed the conclusions and policy and practice implications in this report (Chapter 6).

Summary of key points

Review

The evidence review sought to address two overarching questions, namely:

- the association between parenting practices and children's academic attainment and related learning outcomes (referred to as 1a);
- the effectiveness of school-based or school-led interventions in terms of increasing parental engagement and children's academic attainment and related learning outcomes (referred to as 1b).

It focused on children aged 3 to 16 years and included systematic reviews for both research questions, supplemented with randomised controlled trials (RCTs) and quasi-experimental design (QED) studies that (i) focus on the impact of activities and interventions (research question 1b) and (ii) are not found in the included systematic reviews.

Database searches were undertaken by an information specialist in December 2017, and supplemented by citation searching (forward and backward), hand-searching of key journals publishing widely in the topic area and a search of websites of pertinent organisations.

All studies underwent critical appraisal and data extraction using pre-specified criteria. Data were synthesised narratively for all systematic review and primary studies, and wherever possible effect sizes were calculated in a consistent manner for primary studies evaluating intervention effectiveness.

Survey
A brief online survey was sent to all primary and secondary schools in 20 randomly selected local authorities across the nine regions of England. It covered:

- the schools' policies and procedures on parent engagement;
- the type of activities the schools use to support parents' engagement in children's learning;
- respondents' views on what could be done and what inputs are needed to better support parents' engagement.

Results from the survey were analysed quantitatively. A supplementary analysis of interventions listed by survey respondents focused on their nature and the strength of evidence for their effectiveness.

Interviews
Sixteen interview respondents were purposely sampled from survey respondents to achieve a range of education phases, regions, locations, school categories, Ofsted ratings and deprivation levels. Telephone interviews explored the issues identified above in more depth.

In addition, three subject experts were interviewed to explore their perspectives on the emerging research findings.

Agreeing messages for practice
Guidance for schools based on the research and for dissemination by the EEF was developed through discussions between the research team and the EEF advisory panel. It informed the policy and practice implications outlined in this report.

Chapter 3: The relationship between parent engagement practices and children's academic attainment, related learning outcomes and behaviour

Introduction

Previous chapters have set the scene for the study and described the different methods used to answer the research questions. This chapter summarises findings from the reviews pertaining to question 1a, namely the relationship between parents' engagement in their children's learning on the one hand and children's academic attainment, related learning outcomes and behaviour on the other.

Findings from the systematic reviews

Six systematic reviews considered the relationship between parent engagement in children's learning and children's attainment and learning. The nature of these studies is summarised in Table 3.1, while Table 3.2 highlights the main areas of focus of each review. Based on the critical appraisal criteria applied, the reviews were of low and medium quality (Table 3.3).[15] Reviews tended to be good at addressing a clearly focused question, including studies regardless of publication type and combining results using an appropriate method. However, they did not score well in terms of: reporting an *a priori* design; duplicate study selection and data extraction; listing both included and excluded studies (usually the former only); and assessing the scientific quality of included studies and using that assessment when formulating conclusions.

The first review to be considered in this section adopted a wide lens in that it focused on parenting style rather than parent engagement *per se*. Pinquart (2016) undertook a meta-analysis to compare associations of parenting style with the academic outcomes of children and adolescents. The study reviewed 308 studies, including cross-sectional studies but also longitudinal data relating parenting at first assessment to academic achievement at second assessment. Academic achievement was measured using Grade Point Average (GPA) or widely-used academic achievement tests. The meta-analysis found that "[p]arental responsiveness (warmth), behavioral control, autonomy granting, and an authoritative parenting style were associated with better academic performance both concurrently and in longitudinal studies, although these associations were small in a statistical sense. Parental harsh control, and psychological control, as well as neglectful, authoritarian, and permissive parenting styles were related to lower achievement with small to very small effect sizes. With three exceptions, parenting dimensions and styles also predicted change in academic achievement over time" (p.475). Moderating effects were also detected, notably for child age, ethnicity, kind of academic outcome, reporter on parenting and academic achievement, quality of the parenting and achievement measure and publication status.

The author concluded that "researchers and practitioners should not place unduly high expectations on the effects of general parenting dimensions or styles on change in academic achievement. Effects of single parenting styles and dimensions are small or even very small in a statistical sense" (p.491). He argued that there are also some bidirectional associations,

[15] This is based on categorising total scores out of 11 as follows: low (≤4), medium (5-8) and high (9-11).

meaning that correlations of parenting with academic achievement cannot be interpreted as pure effects of parenting on the child outcome; specifically, it is not known if child academic achievement predicts changes in parenting style over time. Practically, the results suggest that "in order to promote academic achievement of their children, parents may in particular increase warmth and authoritative parenting and avoid harsh control as well as psychological control" (p.491). However, given that changes in academic achievement were small on average, and certainly smaller than those in previous meta-analyses that had examined school-specific parent engagement, the author contended that "effective ways of promoting academic performance should also include other measures, such as promoting school-specific parental involvement" (p.491). More specifically, "specific parental behaviours aimed at directly promoting academic achievement (such as communication with the child about school issues) can be expected to produce larger effects than general parental behaviors of parenting styles that will have rather indirect effects on academic achievement mediated by achievement motivation [...], self-regulation [...], or other variables" (p.488).

Several more focused systematic reviews looked at parent engagement specifically and its relationship with academic and related learning outcomes. The first of these sought to synthesise qualitatively the results of meta-analyses that examined the impact of parental involvement on student academic achievement, and identify any generalisable findings across the meta-analyses regarding the relationship between these two constructs (Wilder 2014). The study included nine meta-analyses, which collectively covered children aged 3-18 years, and focused on two broad types of academic outcome: standardised tests and non-standardised assessments (e.g. GPA, class grade, test grade, teachers' ratings regarding both students' academic performance and behaviour). The majority of the meta-analyses reviewed indicated that parental involvement plays a significant role in children's academic achievement regardless of their grade level; two meta-analyses noted exceptions, suggesting that parental involvement appeared to have a more significant impact at elementary [primary] level than in later grades. This could be because parents are more knowledgeable about subjects at lower grades and better placed to affect nascent study habits and skills, but also because children entering adolescence are attempting to become independent from their parents. There was no positive relationship between parents providing homework assistance and student academic achievement, indeed in two meta-analyses the correlation was negative. The authors offered two plausible explanations for this finding, namely that (i) parents are rarely trained to teach certain concepts and may be unfamiliar with appropriate teaching methods, and (ii) students who are struggling academically may be more likely to request parental assistance with homework.

The study also examined the extent to which the relationship between parent involvement and student achievement was moderated by ethnicity, the definition of parental involvement and the measure of academic achievement. Taking the first of these, all of the studies that looked at ethnicity were consistent in finding that the relationship is generalisable across ethnic groups. Potentially, therefore, parental involvement may contribute significantly to reducing the achievement gap between different ethnic groups. Second, the relationship between parental involvement and student achievement was strong regardless of how parental involvement was defined, although it was strongest if the definition focused on parental expectations for their children's academic achievement:

“Parental expectations reflect parents’ beliefs and attitudes toward school, teachers, subjects, and education in general. As children are likely to harbor similar attitudes and beliefs as their parents, having high parental expectations appears vital for academic achievement of children” (p.392). Third, the method of assessing student academic performance did not seem to affect the existence of the relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement, although it did affect the strength of that relationship. Specifically, the impact of parental involvement on student performance may be significantly stronger if there is a more global measure of achievement, such as GPA, rather than a specific measure, for example a grade on an in-class achievement test. The synthesised findings were inconclusive regarding the type of the assessment used in measuring academic achievement (e.g. standardised vs. non-standardised measures).

Published one year later, the review by Castro et al. (2015) sought to study the overall impact of parent participation on academic achievement in all the studies carried out with students of kindergarten, primary and secondary education (4 to 16/18 years) between the years 2000 and 2013. It included 37 studies of various designs but all quantitative in nature, with the majority coming from the US. The meta-analysis looked at general achievement, maths, reading, sciences, foreign language and other curricular subjects (e.g. art and music). It found an average effect size for all studies of 0.12 ($p<.01$), representing a positive association between greater parental involvement and better academic results. Even though this is small, the authors argued that for a given student it could be the difference between school failure and success. Effects were positive for all of the outcomes bar one, with different size effects depending on the definition of parental involvement. The largest effect was linked to parental expectations (0.22), followed by communication with children about school activities (0.20), whereas for parental supervision of schoolwork (homework) it was only 0.02. Reading with children (0.17), overall parent participation (0.17) and parental style (0.13) all exhibited an important influence. By contrast, the effect size for parents’ attendance and participation in school activities was not statistically significant.

Aside from the type of parent participation, statistically significant differences were also found as a function of other moderator variables, notably the measure of academic achievement (higher for standardised vs. non-standardised tests), type of achievement (largest for curricular subjects such as art and music, lowest for foreign languages), educational level (largest for secondary, lowest for kindergarten), type of publication (lower for scientific journals), and type of population (higher for general cf. specific groups). Overall, the authors concluded that “The strongest associations between type of parental involvement and academic achievement were found when parents have high academic expectations for their children, develop and maintain communication with them about school activities and schoolwork, and promote the development of reading habits. These findings are consistent with the previous meta-analytical literature, and suggest that the most effective modality of parent involvement has to do with accompanying and supervising children’s main school goals, which are to study and to learn” (p.41).

Also published in the same year was the critical review by See and Gorard (2015a) of whether parental behaviours and attitudes have a causal role in the educational outcomes with which they are associated. It included studies from the early years to post-compulsory education. The authors identified 1,008 relevant studies, 77 of which provided sufficient

evidence for a robust causal model for parental involvement. The study looked at academic outcomes, notably school readiness (ability to read letters of the alphabet and count to 10), cognitive development and standardised tests (such as GPAs and key stage tests). It also examined related child learning outcomes, including school attendance, school adjustment, the likelihood of staying on or being excluded from school, and post-compulsory education participation.

The review found that two kinds of early parental behaviour are positively associated with school readiness and successful school outcomes. One is parents' reading to their children in the early years and the related quality of early parent-child (particularly mother-child) interaction. How mothers interact with their child in problem-solving activities also has a positive link with the child's school performance. The other parental behaviour shown to be positively related to school readiness is parents' support for children's learning in the early years. The review also found a small number of intervention studies that provided a "slight basis" (p.353) for a causal relationship at pre-school age, especially in the quality of mother-child interaction and the home environment. These included interventions to encourage parent-child interaction and those that aimed at enhancing a supportive home learning environment: "These studies together offer some promise that the quality of parental interaction with their children at a very young age in a supportive learning home environment may have a positive and long-term impact on children's subsequent academic performance" (p.354).

For school-aged children, two kinds of parental behaviour were shown to have positive associations with children's school outcomes: home-school partnership and parental interest in children's academic activities, which is often manifested in the way they support their children's achievement during their schooling. However, the authors commented that "the evidence for the effectiveness of PI [parental involvement] at school is less than that for pre-school. It is promising, but no more than that at this stage" (p.357).

Overall, the authors concluded that "given the paucity of robust evaluations of interventions, this review should be regarded as indicative rather than 'definitive'. Nonetheless, it is clear that despite some doubts about the quality and rigour of some of these studies, there is considerable evidence that parental interest and involvement in their child's education are associated with, and appear in the correct sequence to cause, educational outcomes. This is true from pre-school upwards" (p.360).

Two other reviews provided evidence relevant to this section, both looking specifically at young children (the others were across the age range). The first of these evaluated the relationship between learning outcomes and parental involvement during early childhood education and early elementary education, covering children aged from pre-school to nine years of age (Ma et al. 2016). The rationale for the study was that previous meta-analyses in this subject area had paid inadequate attention to early childhood education. The review included 46 studies of various quantitative designs (including experimental and natural) and produced several key findings.

First, a meta-analysis showed that, overall, there is a "reasonably strong and definitely positive" (p.790) correlation between parental involvement and child learning outcomes

(ES=.51). There were some apparently counterintuitive negative effects of parent involvement, but these were deemed to stem from parents, schools and communities taking action when children are at risk of academic failure.

Second, the relationship between learning outcomes and parental involvement was weaker for the younger children (up to about age 9 years) who were the focus of the study than for older children. The authors hypothesised that this may be because older children can more clearly articulate their educational needs to parents, making it easier for parents to develop a plan of action for involvement, whereas younger children are less able to articulate, making it harder for parents to know exactly how to help them. Accordingly, the authors advised that "[it] appears that highly structured parental involvement programs are what is needed for the unique developmental period [early childhood education and early elementary (school) education]" (p.793).

Third, the meta-analysis explored the role of different frameworks of parental involvement on the relationship between learning outcomes and parental involvement. It found that the role of parents ('family involvement') is more important than the role of schools and communities ('partnership development'). The former involves "the proactive engagement of parents in various activities and behaviors that aim to promote learning and development of their children" (p.773), whereas the latter emphasises "the critical importance of open communication, healthy relationships, mutual respects (for differences), and genuine wiliness to share power between families and schools"[family-school partnership] (p.775) and "aims to tap into various community resources to offer programs and services that support child development at home and in school" [family-school-community partnership] (p.775). Accordingly, the authors advised that "[w]hen resources are limited or priorities need to be addressed, family involvement should precede partnership development" (p.791). That said, when developing partnerships, "building institutional capacity is the clear choice for priority" (p.791).

Fourth, the relationship between learning outcomes and parental involvement was stronger when the following aspects of *family involvement* were emphasised: behavioural involvement, home supervision and home-school connection. Since all three aspects share a similar magnitude of effects, an emphasis on any aspect would yield a similar benefit to the relationship.

Fifth, a stronger relationship emerged between learning outcomes and parental involvement when the following *school- and community-related* factors were adopted: schools and social services gain more capacity to engage parents; school and community leaders have respectful and effective relationships with families and children; and authentic partnerships among families, schools and communities are institutionalised in an organization's culture, practices and programmes. Again, these three factors share a similar magnitude of effects, suggesting that adopting any of them would benefit the relationship to a similar degree.

Overall, the authors concluded that "parents, schools, and communities that actively pursued these aspects of family involvement [behavioural involvement; home supervision; home-school connection] and partnership development [schools and social services gain

more capacity to engage parents; school and community leaders have respectful and effective relationships with families and children; authentic partnerships among families, schools and communities are institutionalised in an organisation's culture, practices and programmes] would experience a stronger relationship between learning outcomes and parental involvement" (p.791) and that, accordingly, these emphases "should be key components in any plan or program of parental involvement with the goal to motivate families, schools, and communities to promote learning outcomes of children" (p.792).

The aim of the other review that focused on younger children was to determine how father involvement relates to early learning outcomes for children aged 3-8 years, with a particular focus on the transition to school (McWayne et al. 2013). The 21 studies that were included involved a mix of short-term predictive, longitudinal and cross-sectional designs, with the majority conducted in the US. Meta-analyses examined the association between quantitative and qualitative aspects of parenting by fathers and, respectively, children's cognitive academic skills, prosocial skills, externalising and internalising behaviour problems, and self-regulation.

Overall, the meta-analysis demonstrated a small but statistically significant relationship between direct father involvement and children's early learning. Further analyses showed that the *quantity* of positive engagement activities was positively related to children's cognitive academic skills, internalising problems and self-regulation (relatively stronger associations for the latter two comparisons), with trend-level findings for the positive association between children's prosocial skills and the quantity of engagement. The frequency of fathers' positive engagement activities was moderately *negatively* associated with child externalising behaviour problems. Regarding the *qualitative* elements of fathering, positive parenting behaviours were positively linked to children's cognitive academic skills, prosocial skills and self-regulation (the latter two comparisons again being the strongest). Conversely, negative parenting behaviours were positively associated with externalising behaviour problems and negatively associated with cognitive academic skills. Moderator analyses showed that the relationship between direct father involvement and children's social and pre-academic skills is stronger and more consistent for fathers living with their young children and for children who are White. Income status as a moderator was only significant at the trend level, suggesting that the relationship between direct father involvement and children's early learning skills may be the same across levels of socio-economic status.

The authors concluded that "father involvement (both quantity of positive engagement activities and aspects of parenting quality equally) demonstrated a small to moderate and consistent association with key early childhood competencies, with preliminary data suggesting that this link differed based on certain characteristics of the father" (p.913). Further, "both quantity and quality of direct father involvement matter. More specifically, aspects of parenting quality (e.g. warmth, nurturance, and responsiveness reflecting positive parenting and, alternatively, harshness, punitiveness, nonresponsiveness reflecting a negative parenting style) and frequency of positive engagement activities (both general [e.g. playing] and learning specific [e.g. reading to the child]) are important in predicting children's social and academic success" (p.914). The authors were particularly encouraged to find that "the strongest relationships were between fathers' direct involvement (quantity

and quality) and children's self-regulatory capacities, indicated by self-regulation behaviors on the positive side and internalizing/externalizing problems on the negative side" (p.911). This is because such skills are widely regarded as the foundation for social and academic learning. The authors further suggested that the surprising positive association between the quantity of fathers' engagement and children's internalising problems might be because fathers become more involved when children display shy, withdrawn or anxious behaviours in early childhood. Taking all things into account, the review authors recommended that early childhood education dually targets reductions in negative paternal parenting practices and encourages fathers' positive involvement in their children's early learning.

Conclusions

The systematic review evidence contained in this chapter shows that there is a positive association between parental engagement in children's learning and learning outcomes, and that this holds regardless of the child's socio-economic status and grade level. Different types of parental engagement are more important at different developmental stages, although parental expectations for children's academic achievements appear to be particularly important. Given these findings, what can early years settings and schools do to support parents' engagement in their children's learning, and specifically what effect do such activities have on parent engagement and children's academic attainment, related learning outcomes and behaviour? This is the subject of the next chapter.

Table 3.1: Nature of the systematic reviews for question 1a

Author(s)	Review type	Review aim	Age range/target group	Eligible / ineligible studies	Number / type of studies included	Samples	Countries where studies took place
Castro et al. (2015)	Meta-analysis	To study the overall impact of parent participation on achievement in all the studies carried out with students of kindergarten, primary and secondary education between 2000 and 2013	School children from kindergarten to end of secondary school (4-16/18 years)	Published 2000-2013, include parent participation in their child's education, examine children from kindergarten to the end of compulsory education and examine the relationship between parent participation and academic outcome with a correlation coefficient or a regression model. Ineligible if they have insufficient quantitative data, or have design and methodology problems	37 quantitative studies of various designs	Mixture of universal and targeted	Majority from US, with 7 others from Mexico, Korea, Egypt, Iceland, Greece, Cambodia and Arabs in Israel respectively
Ma et al. (2016)	Meta-analysis	To evaluate the relationship between learning outcomes and parental involvement during early childhood education and early elementary education	Pre-school to grade 3 (3-9 years)	Examine the relationship between learning outcomes and parental involvement	46 studies, of various designs, all quantitative, including experimental and natural	Not stated	Not stated

				during the period of early childhood education and early elementary education. Ineligible if published before 1990 or not in English, did not include key words, were overly narrative, did not include the level of statistics required for analysis			
McWayne et al. (2013)	Meta-analysis	To determine the extent to which: fathers' direct involvement is associated with children's early learning skills immediately prior to, during, and immediately following the transition into school across multiple studies; and father involvement is related to early learning outcomes for children ages 3-8 years. Also if there are distinct patterns in these associations dependent upon the type of fathering, early learning indicator or father demographic characteristics	Children aged 3-8 years	Published 1998-2008, measuring direct father involvement and early social or cognitive skills for children aged 3-8 years. Qualitative studies only included if they "contained quantitative data that could not be found elsewhere".	21 studies (22 independent samples). All were convenient sampling. 9 short-term predictive or longitudinal, and 14 cross-sectional	Not stated	16 in the US and one each in in Turkey, New Zealand, Wales, Holland and Canada
Pinquart (2016)	Meta-analysis	To compare associations of parenting with academic outcomes, and to identify study characteristics that moderate	Students in school (mean age < 20 years)	Completed before June 2015, with reported or computable	308 studies of various designs, all quantitative, including cross-	Not stated	Not stated

		the size of associations between parenting dimensions/styles and academic performance		statistics, that assess (a) parental warmth / responsiveness, levels of control, autonomy or protection and parenting styles as defined by Maccoby and Martin (1983), and (b) academic achievement through tests or grade point average (GPA)	sectional studies and longitudinal studies		
See and Gorard (2015a)	Critical review	To consider whether parental behaviours and attitudes have a causal role in the educational outcomes with which they are associated	School children from early years to post-compulsory education	Mention school academic attainment or educational participation after school age, aspirations, attitudes and behaviours or an SES background term such as parental education, plus any causal term or any research design that would be appropriate for testing a causal model. Ineligible if specifically	1,008 (designs not specified), with 77 providing sufficient evidence for a robust causal model for parental involvement	Not stated	Not stated

				concern children with special needs, examine adults and professional learning beyond 21, do not include attainment as an outcome measure			
Wilder (2014)	Meta-synthesis (qualitative)	To synthesise the results of meta-analyses that examined the impact of parental involvement on student academic achievement, and identify any generalisable findings across the meta-analyses regarding the relationship between these two constructs	School children	Meta-analyses that investigate the relationship between parental involvement and student academic attainment. Ineligible if not published in a peer-reviewed journal	9 meta-analyses	Differed by meta-analysis and not stated	Not stated – varied meta-analyses

Table 3.2: Focus of the systematic reviews for question 1a

Author(s)	Communicating with children on school issues	Supervising, assisting with and/or checking homework	Reading with children	Attendance at / participation in school activities	Communicating with the school	Creating a positive home learning environment	Parent behaviours	Parent attitudes	Parent expectations	Parenting style
Castro et al. (2015)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No (unless included as participation in school activities)	Yes (included homework supervision)	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Ma et al. (2016)	Yes (home discussion)	Yes (home supervision)	Yes (intellectual involvement)	Yes (school participation)	Yes (home-school connection)	No	Yes	No	No	No
McWayne et al. (2013)	Yes (included under positive parenting engagement)	Yes (included under positive parenting engagement)	Yes (included under positive parenting engagement)	No (not specified, but may be included under positive parenting engagement)	Yes (included under positive parenting engagement)	No (not specified, but may be included under positive parenting engagement)	Yes (included under positive parenting engagement)	No	No	Yes (included under positive and negative parenting)
Pinquart (2016)	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Not specifically, although this is an aspect of proactive behavioural control	Yes
See and Gorard (2015a)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Unclear	Unclear	Yes (included help with child's schoolwork and reading at home)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

Wilder (2014)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 3.3: Critical appraisal of the systematic reviews for question 1a

Author (date)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**Total**
Castro et al. (2015)	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	4
Ma et al. (2016)	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	5
McWayne et al. (2013)	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	8
Pinquart (2016)	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	5
See and Gorard (2015a)	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	4
Wilder (2014)	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	3
TOTAL	6	0	4	1	5	0	3	1	0	6	3	-

1. Addressed clearly focused question
2. *A priori* design reported
3. Conducted comprehensive literature search
4. Undertook duplicate study selection and data extraction
5. Included studies regardless of publication type
6. Provided list of studies included/excluded
7. Provided characteristics of included studies
8. Assessed scientific quality of studies
9. Scientific quality of studies used appropriately in formulating conclusions
10. Methods used to combine results were appropriate
11. Assessed likelihood of publication bias

Summary of key points

A critical appraisal of the six included systematic reviews shows that they are of low or medium quality. Nevertheless, they provide valuable evidence, summarised here.

Parent involvement plays a key role in children's academic attainment. The balance of evidence suggesting that it holds regardless of socio-economic status and across grade levels, although some studies suggest that it may be stronger in the early years while others suggest that it is stronger for older children (because they can articulate what they are doing / need).

The association is strongest if parental involvement is defined as parental expectations for their children's academic achievement.

There is no positive relationship between parents providing homework assistance and academic achievement.

In the early years, the evidence supports the importance of parents' reading to / with their children (and associated interactions) and support for learning (creating a supportive home learning environment).

For school-aged children the evidence supports the importance of home-school partnership and parental interest in children's academic activities.

There is a weak association between general parenting style and academic attainment; there is value in promoting authoritative parenting but it is also necessary to promote school-specific parental involvement.

There is a small association between father involvement (both quantity and quality) with children aged 3-8 years and children's early learning. This applies across different socio-economic status levels.

Chapter 4: The effectiveness of interventions in increasing parental engagement and children's academic attainment, related learning outcomes and behaviour

Introduction

The previous chapter showed that according to evidence synthesised in systematic reviews there is a positive association between parents' engagement in their children's learning and child attainment and related learning outcomes. This chapter examines the effectiveness of interventions designed to promote parent engagement in their children's learning in terms of parent engagement and children's academic attainment, related learning outcomes and behaviour. The first part summarises evidence from systematic reviews, while the second and third parts provide narrative and quantitative syntheses respectively of relevant primary studies published since the systematic reviews.

Findings from the systematic reviews

Eight systematic reviews were identified as being particularly relevant, three of which were summarised in an (additional) extended review. The nature of the studies reviewed here and the interventions they cover are summarised in Tables 4.1 and 4.2 respectively. Results of the critical appraisal of studies suggests that they are mostly of medium quality (Table 4.3).[16] Reviews were generally good at addressing clearly focused questions, conducting a comprehensive literature search, including studies regardless of publication type and using appropriate methods of synthesis. The main areas of weakness were not doing – or not appearing to do – the following: report design *a priori*; undertake duplicate study selection *and* data extraction (often reportedly partial, or done for one but not both); list included and excluded studies (always included but never excluded); and assess the likelihood of publication bias.

Before summarising the main findings, some preliminary observations may be made. One is that in terms of the phase of education there is less evaluation meeting the study inclusion criteria for secondary schools than for early years settings and primary schools. As regards the six Epstein categories, very little relates clearly to 'decision-making', 'volunteering' or 'collaborating with the community'; instead, most of the research pertains to 'parenting' and 'learning at home', with some studies considering 'communicating'.

Only one review considered the impact of parent training interventions on *academic* outcomes. Grindal et al. (2016) sought to examine the associations between the addition of parenting education services to preschool programmes and programme impacts on children's cognitive and pre-academic skills in early childhood. Parenting education, also known as parent training or parenting skills programmes, was defined as systematic efforts to improve parenting skills, behaviour, interactions and attitudes, and included both offering parents modelling and providing opportunities to practise parenting behaviours with their children. There were 46 studies involving experimental or quasi-experimental designs, all conducted in the US with children aged 3-5 years. Interventions mostly took the

[16] This is based on categorising total scores out of 11 as follows: low (≤4), medium (5-8) and high (9-11).

form of home visits or parent groups complementing preschool services and were delivered by teachers, paraprofessional home visitors and other trained workers.

The results of the meta-analysis focused on academic outcomes exclusively, the main conclusion being that the addition of general parenting education was not associated with programme impacts on short-term measures of children's cognitive or pre-academic skills. Specifically, there was no difference in this respect between pre-school programmes that did and did not provide some form of parenting education. However, preschool programmes that provided frequent parenting education through home visits (one or more home visits per month) yielded larger effect sizes when compared with preschool programmes that provided low frequency home visiting (less than one per month). In terms of implications for policy and practice regarding three- to four-year old children from low-income families, the authors concluded that "there is little evidence that a short course of parenting classes that provide information about child development, or one to two home visits per year, produce measurable gains in child cognitive or pre-academic skills above and beyond the effects of direct preschool experiences" but that "more-intensive interventions through one or more home visits per month (in contrast to less frequent interactions between program staff and parents), and that include active learning [the modelling and/or practising of particular parenting skills] for parents, were associated with substantially larger positive impacts of preschool programs on children's cognitive performance" (p.246). Indeed, the added impact equated to an approximate doubling of the effect of preschool alone on the outcomes of interest. The authors advised that this finding is "particularly worth of serious consideration for children who exhibit limited gains from early education alone" (p.246).

Another review also focused on the effectiveness of interventions to improve parent engagement in the early years. O'Connor et al. (2017) evaluated the efficacy of interventions and strategies designed to foster parent-child relationships to support the social and emotional development of preschool children in universal early childhood education and care (ECEC) and a variety of other settings supporting parents and children (notably community groups, play groups, health settings, homes and agencies). It included 21 studies based on seven interventions, including six RCTs (other designs ranged from pre-post to meta-analyses), all from developed countries (the majority from the US). Five of the seven intervention were universal, with the other two targeting specific behavioural and emotional issues. They typically lasted 10-20 weeks (the longest was two years), and took place in various settings, including the home, early childhood centres, health clinics and other community venues (e.g. play groups, community groups). Delivery personnel included public health specialists, family support workers, childcare providers and trained lay people. Components of interventions included building trusting relationships, modelling interactions, affirming parent competence, giving positive feedback and teaching parenting skills. In some cases, play sessions were video-taped.

Results were presented for each intervention, showing that interventions were effective in improving various aspects of parents' engagement with their children. Effects included increased empathy towards to children, greater use of labelled praise, a decrease in commands and negative talk, stronger parent-child bonding and communication with the child, more sensitive responding to the child and increased child-led language interactions.

The authors argued that although "current parent-child relationships and children's social and emotional development interventions and programs are not designed specifically for use by educators in ECEC settings to promote parent-child relationships" (p.420), the fact that educators in such settings are often already seeking to help build strong parent-child relationships means that they would benefit from "appropriate, feasible, and sustainable resources [that] may further support the existing work they do with children and parents and build their capacity and confidence to promote and nurture parent-child relationships, which is vital for children's development" (p.420). The same review (O'Connor et al. 2017) also looked at the effectiveness of interventions in terms of children's behaviour. Effects were reported for three interventions (one pre-post study in an ECEC setting, and in other settings an RCT and a meta-analysis), all of which had positive results.

One review looked at efforts by schools to communicate better with parents of students with disabilities. Specifically, it sought to synthesise descriptively the literature on parent training interventions designed to increase parent involvement for parents of school-aged children with disabilities and to evaluate the effects of this intervention using meta-analysis (Goldman and Burke 2017). It identified eight studies comprising six independent study samples, all of which were RCTs and conducted in the US (an inclusion criterion), with children ranging in age from 3 to 21 years (mean age 8.1 years in the four studies that reported child age). The interventions all focused on improving parents' participation in 'Individualized Education Program' (IEP)[17] meetings, and included video training, handouts sent home with a follow-up telephone call and group or one-to-one parent training meetings with related training packs. In terms of content, all trainings involved some combination of special education law, parents' rights at IEP meetings, IEP team member roles, and how to participate at an IEP meeting. All included verbal explanation, with other forms of intervention (e.g. modelling, guided practice) used less consistently across studies. The duration and intensity of the interventions were not stated, although where relevant information was provided the actual sessions lasted between 20 and 60 minutes. Training sessions were conducted by a range of personnel, including special education teachers, family/school liaisons and researchers.

All eight studies measured parent participation in IEP meetings (via direct observation). Outcomes included frequency counts of parent comments, rates of parent comments, duration of parent contributions and mean percentage of intervals with parent contributions. In addition, studies variously included parent, teacher and administrator reports of parent participation, satisfaction, comfort, self-efficacy and knowledge. The meta-analysis found no evidence of a statistically significant effect for parent training in increasing (or decreasing) parent involvement at school for parents of children with disabilities. The diversity of children included in the studies may partially account for this, because the type of involvement is likely to need to differ. It is also possible that focusing solely on parent knowledge and ability is insufficient for improving parent participation unless other IEP team members change their behaviour and schools create collaborative and supportive environments for parent involvement. Accordingly, the authors advised that "these results do not imply that schools should stop encouraging increased parent

[17] An IEP is a document that is developed for any child in US state schools who needs special education. It includes a description of how the child learns and what teachers and service providers will do to help the child learn more effectively.

participation during IEP meetings. Parent involvement is important for student achievement and is legally mandated. Schools need to find new ways to increase parent involvement. But beyond this, schools and researchers should also emphasize the importance of parent involvement via other activities. With additional experimental research that moves beyond the context of the IEP meeting, we can begin to understand how parent involvement affects student outcomes" (p.113).

A review by Kim and Quinn (2013) sought to determine whether classroom- and home-based reading interventions during the summer holiday improve diverse reading outcomes. The review focused on studies conducted in the US or Canada and interventions for children aged 5 to 14 years, with the majority taking place in elementary (primary) school. It included 35 studies (covering 41 interventions), 14 (40%) of which were RCTs or regression discontinuity designs and the remaining 21 (60%) QEDs. Two-thirds (63%) of the interventions were classroom-based, the most common goals of which were the remediation of learning difficulties followed by the prevention of learning loss for low-income children. The other third (34%) of interventions were home-based and were designed to reduce summer learning loss or increase parental involvement. (A small proportion of interventions (2%) had classroom- and home-based components.) The review provided few details on the content of interventions but most involved sending books home with children.

When results from all studies were combined there was a small mean effect ($d = .10$, $p<.05$) on total reading achievement. Statistically significant mean effects were also identified for reading comprehension and fluency and decoding (ranging in size from .13 to .43). The size of the effects across these outcomes was similar for classroom and home interventions. However, neither type of intervention had an effect on children's vocabulary, arguably because acquiring new words through wide reading is an incremental process, and a three-month summer intervention is not long enough to allow this. The authors concluded that "the mean effect size was positive and statistically significant in four of five outcomes in studies with a majority of low-income children. In addition, student income characteristics moderated effects on reading comprehension" (p.400). Regarding the latter comment, the results of the review suggested that summer reading interventions may be particularly effective for low-income children. The authors also advised that the findings indicate the importance of involving both teachers and parents in children's home literacy activities, as few interventions were designed to integrate the effect elements of both: "Right before summer vacation, policy makers could implement a school-based family literacy event, in which teachers equip parents and children with skills and knowledge to engage in home literacy activities […] Toward this end, it would be desirable to test an intervention including classroom teacher-directed comprehension lessons during the last month of school and home-based independent book reading and parent-child discussions about books" (p.421).

The remaining reviews in this section were broader in scope than those described thus far. Higgins and Katsipataki (2015) undertook an umbrella review of 13 meta-analyses with a focus on how school-home partnerships to improve parental involvement impact on school-aged children's cognitive and academic outcomes. They grouped the constituent studies and associated interventions into three categories: general parental involvement programmes, which have a number of components, such as parent workshops, meetings in school,

volunteering opportunities and home activities (n=5 meta-analyses, 213 primary studies); home and family literacy programmes, such as book reading, family literacy activities and summer home reading programmes (n=5, 134);[18] and targeted interventions for families in need, notably where there are concerns about parenting, or families in crisis, or children with special educational needs (n=3, 371). Studies in the first two categories were school-led, while those in the third category had a broader health and social care perspective. Details on the nature of discrete interventions within the meta-analyses were not given.

The results showed consistent evidence about the extent of impact from general approaches (three to six months average additional gain for children's educational outcomes) and for targeted intervention (four to six months), with a wider range of estimates for family literacy (two to eight months) which was deemed likely to be a product of the diversity of approaches. Further detail was provided about each of the three categories. In relation to general approaches, the gains were found to be achievable across the age range, "with some indication of greater gains for older pupils" (p.282), and across subjects but "with more secure evidence for reading and literacy than science and mathematics" (pp.282-283). With regard to family literacy interventions, data on long-term impact indicated "more robust evidence of decline in follow-up measures or washout than increase" (p.284). As for the targeted interventions, the evidence pointed to sustained gains even into adolescence: "Indications are that frequency, intensity and duration of support are all important with reasonable consistency across the meta-analysis […] [F]or these children we should intervene early, intervene intensively and sustain the intervention over several years, ideally with a flow-through or follow-up component into schools" (p.284).

Overall, the authors concluded that "PI [parental involvement], where school, family and community partnerships are developed to support and improve children's learning in school, offers a realistic and practical approach that has consistent evidence of beneficial impact on children and young people's attainment" (pp.287-288), but that different approaches are needed for children of different ages. They further advised that whereas early literacy approaches are usually beneficial, with as much as seven or eight months additional progress achievable in terms of young children's learning, other areas of practice, notably home visiting or parental support for homework, are less successful on average. Arguably the most extensive reviews were undertaken by a team from Durham University. See and Gorard (2013) undertook a systematic review to identify the most efficacious programmes for different age groups of children, and the factors that promote or inhibit their implementation. Research studies were eligible if they described a parental involvement intervention or attempted robust evaluation of a parental involvement intervention relevant to learning or attainment outcomes, and the target group was parents and children aged 0 to 18 years and educated in mainstream settings. The review included 68 studies, most of which were RCTs or QEDs (although some study designs were not clear). Interventions were classed as follows: parental training (n=22); home-school collaboration (n=16); a combination of parent involvement strategies (n=11); home learning (n=7); family/home/parent support (n=4); school-based home intervention (n=3); parental monitoring (n=2); paired reading (n=2); and dialogic reading (n=1). Interventions were both universal and targeted at families from disadvantaged backgrounds.

[18] This included the Kim and Quinn (2013) review of summer reading programmes, which is discussed in more detail elsewhere in this chapter.

The results were split between pre-school (n=26), primary school (n=23), secondary school (n=11) and across age groups (n=8). The authors concluded that "although increasing parental involvement sounds plausible, there is no solid evidence base for intervention yet, in most age groups and for most approaches. *Where they are compared with parental involvement interventions, classroom interventions to achieve the same end currently have more evidence of effectiveness in raising attainment* [our emphasis]" (p.79). They acknowledged that there is promise but argued that "until a programme of robust development and evaluation is funded […] it would be wrong to assume that policies or practice in this area will be rewarded with increased child attainment (whatever other benefits there may be)" (p.79).

This review was updated subsequently in two separate scoping reviews focusing on children aged 0-7 and 7-11 years respectively (See 2015a/b). The first of these (See 2015a) sought to identify studies of interventions aimed at supporting and improving parental involvement in their children's education with evidence that they improve educational outcomes. Although the aim was to look for UK interventions, studies from outside UK were considered for parental involvement strategies that were also delivered in the UK or if they were generic or universal parent involvement interventions. A total of 93 studies were identified (including 63 from the updated search). Study designs included RCTs, QEDs, systematic reviews, meta-analyses and those using correlational and longitudinal designs. Interventions were classed as follows: parent training/parent support (n=33); home-school partnership (n=15); shared reading/parent reading/dialogic reading (n=13); home instruction (including home visitations) (n=13); combination (n=10); Parents as Teachers (n=5); and others (n=4).

A number of parental involvement interventions were shown to have some effects on young children's learning outcomes, although many would need more robust evaluations to confirm their relative benefits. There were only eight UK studies for this age group (covering children aged 3 to 5 years) and all, apart from one, were judged to be weak in evidence for various reasons. The most promising parent involvement interventions for children aged 3 to 5 years were those that involved a combination of school strategies where teachers work with parents to enhance the home and school environment. The review found that training parents to read to their children at home in shared or dialogic reading has no evidence of impact, and in some cases they even have a negative impact. The Chicago Child-Parent Center programme was the only intervention shown consistently to have a positive impact on the learning outcomes of children aged 3 to 5, and the only one with an evaluation judged to be of medium quality.

The author concluded that "Much research on parental involvement in the UK has been about enhancing parental engagement in their children's education, enhancing parenting skills to support children's learning. While these have been successful, few studies have been conducted to test the effects of such parental engagement strategies on school outcomes of children. Where they had, many were not robustly evaluated, had poor designs with serious flaws, such as no pre-/post-test comparisons, no random allocation to ensure that groups were similar, small sample size or big samples with very high attrition (over 30%). The evidence, particularly those in the UK, is therefore not reliable enough for judging

the relative effectiveness of interventions for children in different stages of development" (p.87).

In the second update of the original review, See (2015b) focused on children aged from 7 years up to the transition to secondary school (essentially 11 years). The review was concerned with interventions designed to enhance parents' participation in their child's learning and in their own learning, and in school outcomes (e.g. performance on standardised tests and teacher assessments, school attendance and attitude towards subjects). It included 54 studies, most of which were conducted in the US. The main outcomes of interest included school outcomes, such as performance on standardised tests and teacher assessments, school attendance and student attitude towards subject.

The studies were categorised according to the primary type of intervention. First are parent training programmes, which included activities for parents to do at home with their children. Of the 17 studies in this category, six showed negative effects on school outcomes and the only medium-quality study suggested a negative effect on children's reading comprehension. Second are home literacy activities, whereby parents receive instructional materials and resources to facilitate their engagement with children's literacy activities at home (there is no requirement for parents to attend organised training). While six of the 12 studies in this category had positive effects, all were reported to have methodological flaws; of the others, five showed no intervention effects on reading, while in another study the children in the control group actually made greater progress. Third are initiatives to promote home-school collaboration in which schools work with parents or engage parents in school work (e.g. homework activities that involve parents and children working together, getting parents to volunteer in school activities). The 12 studies here were split between negative, mixed and positive effects, but even some of the latter had flaws (e.g. not measuring achievement but claiming to affect it). Fourth are efforts to involve parents in homework; three studies found no effect and two reported positive effects but had methodological flaws. Fifth are technology-based approaches to monitor children's school work and enhance parents' communication with the school; all three studies of such interventions were either very small or did not measure achievement. The final type of intervention sought to involve parents in the classroom, with two of the three studies reporting no effect.

All of the approaches described in the previous paragraph were assessed by the review's author as being 'unpromising'.[19] Indeed, she concluded that "There are no promising approaches[20] for this age group of children. Almost all the studies were rated weak. There was either no evidence that outcomes were evaluated, or if evaluated the findings were based on weak design. There were some where evaluations were attempted but the quality of the studies was so poor that the results were difficult to interpret. There were a number which were programmes with only process evaluations. All the studies reviewed had at least one serious flaw in design or analysis. Even the medium studies had flaws. There are no

[19] The report defined 'unpromising approaches' as "those which have been evaluated and found to have no beneficial effects, or where the evidence is unclear either due to mixed results or poor design" (See 2015b: 5).
[20] The report defined 'promising' approaches as "those that have been robustly evaluated and have demonstrated efficacy in well-designed evaluations. They show clear evidence connecting learning or academic outcomes to the programme" (See 2015b: 31).

approaches for which we are confident enough to recommend given the weak evidence base. UK studies were particularly weak" (See 2015b: 1-2). The author added an important note of caution, namely that the lack of evidence for promising approaches "does not mean that PI [parent involvement] approaches are not effective, but rather flaws in design, methodology and analyses common in evaluation studies need to be addressed before judgements about program effectiveness can be made" (p.31).

See and Gorard (2015b) brought together the findings of these three systematic reviews in one extended review, focusing on the literature linking parental involvement in their child's education to attainment at or before primary school. They drew on 127 evaluations, which were fairly evenly split between pre-school and school age in terms of target group, with a small number (10) running across these age categories. The outcomes of interest were school readiness, performance on standardised tests, teacher assessments, school attendance and attitude towards subjects. Interventions were categorised as follows: parent training/support (n=47); home-school partnership (n=23); shared reading (n=12); family literacy (n=11); home instruction (n=11); parent as teacher (n=5); use of IT (n=3); homework involvement (n=3); parents in class (n=2); and a combination / others (n=15).

Of the interventions for young children before or preparing for school, most were about supporting parents to facilitate home learning. Although several (22) such studies reported positive effects for parental involvement, most of these provided very weak, low-quality evidence; limitations included the lack of a comparison group, use of a non-randomised comparison, small samples, no pre-post test comparisons, high attrition and only teacher perception of a child's progress. Two multicomponent interventions stood out as promising (medium-quality evidence with positive effects), both for children aged 3 to 5 years, although their multifaceted nature makes it hard to isolate the effects of parental involvement *per se*. One was the Chicago Child-Parent Center, which combines parental involvement, home support and classroom strategies. This had a positive impact on children's learning outcomes. The other was ParentCorps, a home-school partnership which seeks to enhance teachers' skills in identifying and addressing children's needs in early years settings but also uses after-school group sessions to teach parents effective behaviour management. This had a positive effect on standardised reading tests and teacher assessments of writing and maths.

The review also noted that a large number of interventions for pre-school children showed no promise of improving young children's attainment, albeit based on weak evaluations: parent-child reading (where a parent's prior literacy level appears to be a key determinant); home instruction programmes; home-school partnership programmes; and parents as teachers. Evidence for other types of intervention, such as parent support, was deemed inconclusive. Overall, the authors concluded that "there is as yet no clear evidence that increased parental involvement works in terms of improving attainment for very young children. The evidence base is poor, and the slightly better studies are split in terms of their findings. The two medium-quality studies reporting success were balanced by two others reporting no success, and anyway included more that parental involvement in their programmes" (p.256).

The majority of interventions for primary school age children considered in the review sought to support parents to help them with their children's learning and involved a degree of home-school collaboration. The majority of studies were found to be of poor quality and evidence as to the effectiveness of parent involvement was conflicting. One medium-quality study found a positive effect but showed that the classroom element of the intervention was more important than the parent-focused aspect. Several approaches did not appear to have any beneficial impact on attainment, including: training parents in reading strategies and providing reading resources; training parents to work with children at home (the other medium-quality study in the primary age category showed a negative effect on children's reading comprehension); and involving parents in home literacy activities. The evidence was deemed inconclusive for: parent-child reading; home education; and parent support. The authors' overarching conclusion was that "[N]o one seems to have tested whether parental involvement works in terms of enhanced attainment for children. There are no large, strongly designed studies on this topic […] At present, the kinds of activities to enhance parental involvement described at the start of this paper are therefore based on an insecure premise. They may do more harm than good, if only by using resources that could have been used to better effect elsewhere" (pp.259-260). The authors did acknowledge, however, that "there are a few indications of good practice, and some promising developments on the horizon" (p.259).

Table 4.1: Nature of the systematic reviews for question 1b

Author(s)	Review type	Aim of review	Eligible studies designs	Eligible interventions	Age range / target group	Number / type of studies included	Countries where studies took place
Goldman and Burke (2017)	Systematic review and meta-analysis	To descriptively synthesise the literature on parent training interventions to increase parent involvement for parents of school-aged students with disabilities and to evaluate the effects of this intervention using meta-analysis	Studies conducted in the US after 1975 with a group experimental design (i.e., RCT) or a QED in which the intervention group was compared to a business-as-usual control, with an outcome of parental involvement	Parent training interventions	Parents of school-aged children with disabilities, aged 3-21 years	8 RCTs (6 independent study samples). Meta-analysis was 5 studies (4 independent samples)	US
Grindal et al. (2016)	Meta-analysis	To examine the associations between the addition of parenting education services to preschool programmes and programme impacts on children's cognitive and pre-academic skills in early childhood	High-quality US experimental and quasi-experimental studies with comparable experimental and comparison groups that have at least 10 participants in each condition at follow-up, and experience less than 50% attrition in either	Interventions that provided some form of centre-based preschool services (with or without additional parenting education services) to children from 36 to 60 months old. Cannot be evaluations for the effectiveness	Children aged 36-60 months	46 studies, experimental or QED with a comparison group	US

			the treatment or comparison group between the initiation of treatment and measurement. Cannot be regression-based studies in which the baseline equivalence of treatment and comparison groups was not investigated	of health procedures, or for children with disabilities			
Higgins and Katsipataki (2015)	Umbrella review of meta-analyses	To contribute to understanding different ways that parents and schools develop and maintain working partnerships to improve outcomes for children by focusing on quantitative evidence about parental involvement	Meta-analysis or systematic review with estimates of impact and/or enough data to compute effect size on academic outcome. No correlational studies	Interventions that focus on cognitive and academic outcomes for children	School-aged children (included some studies of pre-school involvement where there was follow-up of impact for children of school age)	13 meta-analyses	Not reported for all, but includes US and Canada
Kim and Quinn (2013)	Meta-analysis	To find out if classroom- and home-based summer reading interventions improve diverse reading outcomes	Experimental or quasi-experimental designs that evaluate the effects of a classroom- or home-based summer reading intervention in	Summer reading interventions, either classroom-based or home-based. No studies that examine prekindergarten and high school programmes	Children in kindergarten to grade 8 (K-8) (5-14 years)	35 studies (41 interventions): 14 RCT or regression-discontinuity design, and 21 QEDs.	US and Canada

			the US or Canada. Studies that evaluate effects on a measure of reading achievement, provide sufficient empirical information to compute an effect size, and include students who were in kindergarten to eighth grade prior to enrolment in the intervention. No single group and pre/posttest design studies or studies that do not allow for analysis of summer programmes alone (without after school programmes)				
O'Connor et al. (2017)	Systematic review	To evaluate the efficacy of interventions, programmes and strategies which have been implemented to foster parent-child relationships to support the social and	Studies that examined (a) interventions to improve parent-child relationships in a	Interventions to foster parent-child relationships	Parents and their children aged 0-5 years	21 articles of 7 different interventions. 7 one group pre-post-test; 6 RCTs; 2 meta-analyses;	14 in US, 2 in UK, 2 in Australia, 1 in Netherlands, 1 in Sweden, 1 in Hong Kong

		emotional development of preschool children in (a) universal early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings and (b) a range of other settings supporting parents and children	range of settings supporting children, and (b) children's social and emotional development			1 two group pre-post; 1 qualitative; 1 controlled trial; 3 no empirical evidence/outline of intervention	
See (2015a) Primary (younger)	Scoping review (update of See and Gorard, 2013)	To identify studies of interventions aimed at supporting and improving parental involvement in their children's education which have evidence that they improve educational outcomes	Studies in English, that examine school outcomes, but not of disadvantaged children or children with special needs or severe social and behavioural difficulties	All types of intervention that included parental involvement in their child's and/or own learning. Studies had to take place in the UK or also be delivered in the UK or had to be generic or universal parent involvement interventions	Parents and children aged 0-7 years from disadvantaged backgrounds in a UK (or similar) context	93 studies. Study type not specified for all but included RCTs, evaluations, quasi-experimental studies, correlational studies, longitudinal studies, systematic reviews, meta-analysis	UK, Canada, US, Australia
See (2015b) Primary (older)	Extended scoping review	To identify parental involvement intervention studies in the UK (and Internationally) that have an impact on the school outcomes of children aged 7 years up to the age of transition to secondary school	Studies that include parental involvement in their child's learning and included measures on school outcomes	Interventions that aim to enhance parents' participation in their child's learning and in their own learning. Cannot be designed for children with severe learning difficulties or social	Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, aged 7 years up to transition to secondary school	54 studies (breakdown of study designs not given but a mixture of studies with and without comparison or control groups)	40 in US, 1 in Texas / Mexico border, 7 in UK, 2 in Canada, 1 international and 1 in each of Switzerland, New Mexico and Cyprus

				behavioural difficulties			
See and Gorard (2013)	Systematic review	To identify the most efficacious programmes for different age groups of children, and the promoting and inhibiting factors in implementing such programmes	Studies describing a parental involvement intervention or attempted robust evaluation of a parental involvement intervention relevant to learning or attainment outcomes. Cannot be handbooks and manuals for interventions	All types of intervention that included parental involvement. Cannot be specialist interventions not in schools	Parents and children aged 0-18 years educated in mainstream settings	68 studies. Mostly QEDs and RCTs, with some designs not clear/reported	Not reported for all but included US, UK Canada, Turkey and Cyprus
See and Gorard (2015b)	Extended review (summary of evidence on primary school age children from three systematic reviews: See and Gorard (2013) and See (2015a/b)	To summarise the results of a review of the literature linking parental involvement in their children's education to attainment at or before primary school	Any evaluations attempting to see whether enhancing parental involvement led to higher attainment outcomes for children. Reported in English language and published between 1990 and 2014	Parent involvement programmes intended to enhance parents' participation in their children's learning and so raise attainment	From birth up to transition to secondary school in the UK (11/12 years)	127 studies (type not specified in detail although some studies had comparison groups, including some RCTs)	Not specified for each study, but included UK, US, Canada and Australia [see above for more details]

Table 4.2: Nature of the interventions in systematic reviews for question 1b

Author(s)	Target group	Aims	Content	Setting(s)	Amount	Delivery mode(s)	Implementer(s)
Goldman and Burke (2017)	Parents of school-aged children with disabilities, aged 3-21 years	To improve parents' participation in IEP [Individualized Education Program] meetings	All trainings involved some variation of content on special education law, parents' rights at IEP meetings, IEP team member roles, and how to participate at an IEP meeting. Type of instruction varied widely; all included some verbal explanation, with other forms (e.g. modelling, guided practice) used less consistently across studies	Phone, school	Many studies did not report length of trainings, but for those that did it ranged from 20 to 60 mins	Mixed: remote (handouts sent home) and in-person (or by phone), and some in group format and some one-to-one	A range of personnel, including special education teachers, family/school liaisons, and researchers
Grindal et al. (2016)	Children aged 36-60 months	Not reported for individual studies/interventions, but generally to improve children's cognitive or pre-academic skills	Home visits, group parenting education, modelling and practising parenting behaviours, preschool	Home visiting, classroom or group-based sessions	Only reported for 7 studies. Most lasted between 8 months and 3 years (provision of preschool service), with weekly parenting classes and/or home visits for part of this	In person – home visits or group sessions	Teachers, paraprofessional home visitors, trained workers, although this was not reported for many studies

Higgins and Katsipataki (2015)	School-aged children	Interventions that were general parental involvement programmes (n=5 meta-analyses), home and family literacy programmes (n=5) , or targeted interventions for families in need (n=3)	In the 5 meta-analyses that were categorised as general parental involvement programmes, there were 213 studies. For the 5 home and family literacy programmes meta-analysis there were 134 studies and for the 3 targeted interventions for families in need there were 371 studies	School-led initiatives and, for the targeted interventions, a health and social care perspective	Individual session details per interventions are not given	Not reported for individual studies within each meta-analysis	Not reported for individual studies within each meta-analysis
Kim and Quinn (2013)	Children in kindergarten to grade 8 (K-8) prior to enrolment (5-14 years)	Most common goal among classroom interventions was the remediation of learning difficulties (75%), followed by the prevention of summer learning loss for low-income children (45%). Most home interventions were designed to reduce summer learning loss (93%) or to increase parental involvement (29%)	No details given other than classroom- or home-based summer reading programmes. Most involved sending books home with children	Classroom and home	Not reported but in summer time between school years, so approximately 6 weeks. One study spanned 3 summers	Not reported for individual studies	Not reported for individual studies
O'Connor et al. (2017)	Parents and their children aged 0-5 years	Improve parent-child relationships; promote school readiness; present a practical way of training service providers; disrupt coercive family processes; connect families to	Components included building trusting relationships, modelling interactions, affirming parent	Small group formats; home visits; agency/school; health setting; universal early childhood	10 weeks to 2 years (mostly 10-20 weeks). All were weekly, except one (8 sessions over 2 years).	In person – either individual (e.g. home visits) or in groups	A range of personnel, including trained practitioners, public health specialists, family support workers /

		resources in the community	competence, positive feedback, reflective techniques, parenting skills and use of video-taped play sessions	settings. Two delivered in early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings and 5 in other settings, including play groups, community groups and health centres.	Most lasted 1-3 hours.		childcare providers, and trained lay people
See (2015a) (Primary younger)	Parents and children aged 0-7 years from disadvantaged backgrounds in the UK (or similar context)	Increase parent involvement in child's learning. Specific intervention aims not reported	Included a combination of strategies where teachers work with parents to enhance the home and school environment. For example: training parents to read to their children; parent training/support; home-school collaboration; home support; classroom strategies; staffed parent resource room; behaviour management strategies; parent-child reading	Mostly carried out in school/pre-school or home, with collaborations between school and home	Varied from 5 weeks to 3 years, depending on type of intervention. Length and number of sessions and frequency were not consistently reported	In person – either individual (e.g. home visits) or in groups, with practice at home	Various, including teachers, child health nurses, health visitors, teaching assistants, researchers (not reported for all studies)

See (2015b) Primary (older)	Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds	Home-school collaboration, specifically, using technology to enhance communication, training parents to work with children at home, involving parents in literacy, homework and the classroom or “other” aims	All interventions involved increasing parental engagement with their child's school outcomes	Varied, including home and educational settings	Individual session details per interventions are not consistently given	Various per intervention (not reported consistently)	Various per intervention (not reported consistently)
See and Gorard (2013)	Parents and children aged 0-18 years educated in mainstream settings	Parental participation in their children's learning, including involvement, behaviour or activities of parents. Pre-school and primary: the most common aims included parent strategies to improve children's reading, language, literacy, maths and science skills, improvement of behaviour and social skills, and promoting home-school collaboration. Secondary school aims included communication between schools and parents on academic performance/progress, parents' involvement in homework, maths achievement, use of computers to facilitate learning, and dropout prevention. Across age group interventions	Included a combination of strategies where teachers work with parents to enhance the home and school environment. For example: training parents to read to their children; parent training/support; home-school collaboration; home support; classroom strategies behaviour management strategies; parent-child reading, home visits, family support services, teacher training	Mostly carried out in schools or early years settings or the home, with home-school collaboration	Weekly for 6-12 weeks is reported most commonly. Individual session details per interventions not consistently given	In person – either individual (e.g. home visits) or in groups, with practice at home	Mostly teachers or researchers

		focused on home-school collaborations, encouraging children to enjoy maths through parental involvement, use of computers at home, and children's reading and comprehension skills					
See and Gorard (2015b)	Parents of children from birth to transition to secondary school in UK (i.e. 11/12 years)	Improving parent involvement in children's learning, and/or children's attainment and learning	A combination of strategies where teachers work with parents to enhance the home and school environment	School/pre-school and/or home	Few details given but see above (See and Gorard 2013; See 2015a/b)	In person (individual or group)	Teachers, other professionals, researchers (see See and Gorard 2013 and See 2015a/b above for more details)

Table 4.3: Critical appraisal of the systematic reviews for question 1b

Author (date)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**Total**
Goldman and Burke (2017)	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	5
Grindal et al. (2016)	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	5
Higgins and Katsipataki (2015)	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	5
Kim and Quinn (2013)	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	7
O'Connor et al. (2017)	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	5
See (2015a)	Y	$N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	7
See (2015b)	Y	$N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	7
See and Gorard (2013)	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	8
#See and Gorard (2015b)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
TOTAL	8	0	8	0	7	1	7	5	4	8	1	-

$ Although no a priori design was reported *per se*, these studies are updates of an earlier review (See and Gorard 2013).
# As this was essentially a summary of three other reviews (See 2015a/b; See and Gorard 2013), it was not deemed appropriate to apply the critical appraisal criteria.

1. Addressed clearly focused question
2. *A priori* design reported
3. Conducted comprehensive literature search
4. Undertook duplicate study selection and data extraction
5. Included studies regardless of publication type
6. Provided list of studies included/excluded
7. Provided characteristics of included studies
8. Assessed scientific quality of studies
9. Scientific quality of studies used appropriately in formulating conclusions
10. Methods used to combine results were appropriate
11. Assessed likelihood of publication bias

Findings from the primary studies (narrative analysis)

Although this review identified relevant primary studies (RCTs and QEDs) for all education phases, there were more for the primary education phase than for the early years or secondary phases. As with the systematic reviews, the main areas of focus for most interventions evaluated in the primary studies were captured by the 'parenting' and 'learning at home' categories of the Epstein typology, although a small number of studies focused on 'communicating'. Some interventions may have included elements of promoting 'decision making', 'volunteering' and 'collaboration with the community', but these were not the main focus in any of the studies identified. A handful of interventions did not obviously fit into any Epstein category and were therefore categorised as 'other'. The results from all primary studies are summarised in what follows according to education phase and, within these, the Epstein categories. Tables 4.4 and 4.5 describe key features of the interventions and evaluations respectively.

Early years phase

Parenting

Several interventions in this category were found to be effective in improving academic attainment, other learning outcomes and parent engagement with children's learning. They were mostly selective and involved pre-schools and a home visiting programme in low-income areas.

The first, a selective intervention targeting pre-school children attending Head Start classes in low-income families, enhanced an existing evidence-based classroom programme with 16 home visits (10 during pre-kindergarten, 6 after transition to kindergarten – ages 3-5 years) (Bierman et al. 2015). The home visit content was designed to reinforce children's language-emergent literacy skills and social-emotional skills introduced in the classroom. It involved giving parents books to encourage dialogic reading and evidence-based learning games and guided pretend play activities that teach letters and letter-sound recognition. The home visit materials to support social-emotional learning drew on classroom routines (e.g. compliments lists, feeling face chart) and parents were encouraged to use techniques that children learnt in school to support self-regulation and conflict resolution. Compared with children receiving the regular classroom programme, the enhanced home visiting version had positive effects in kindergarten on standardised assessments of children's emergent literacy skills (but not vocabulary or reading fluency) and teacher-rated child academic performance (Bierman et al. 2015). In addition, according to teachers, children in the intervention condition were more likely than control group children to be more self-directed in their learning behaviours and more socially competent (no effects were found for teacher-rated child aggression). Parents allocated to the home visiting intervention reported reading in a more interactive way with their children and having longer and more frequent conversations with their children than parents in the control condition, although there was no impact on parent support for children's learning as assessed by independent observations of parent-child interaction.

Exploratory analyses showed that the number of home visits received was unrelated to child outcomes but did correlate significantly with increased parent support with structured tasks and marginally significantly with increased dialogic reading quality (Bierman et al. 2015). In

contrast, the level of parental engagement in the intervention (the extent to which and quality with which parents used the home learning materials as rated by home visitors) significantly predicted increases in child reading fluency and teacher-rated academic performance, as well as parent support for learning as assessed by observation ratings of the structured tasks and home observation ratings collected after the research assessment visits. The authors concluded that, beyond the effects of the classroom programme, the home visiting version promoted significant improvements in child literacy skills, academic performance, self-directed learning, and social competence, demonstrating the utility of the approach in promoting gains in cognitive and social-emotional skills evident after the transition into kindergarten.

A subsequent paper from the same study explored mediating mechanisms. The intervention had a positive effect on parent academic expectations (e.g. how far parents expect their child to go in school and the average grade they expect him/her to receive in school) (Loughlin-Presnal and Bierman 2017). The positive effects on children's literacy skills and teacher-rated academic performance and self-directed learning in Kindergarten were all partially mediated by intervention-related gains in parent academic expectations. There was no effect on parent-child conversations.

A universal/selective intervention (ParentCorps) to increase parent involvement in early learning, and support effective behaviour management at home and in the classroom, comprised a 13-week after-school family programme – group sessions for parents and concurrent sessions for children – and professional development for teachers. This was one of the interventions highlighted as promising in an earlier systematic review (See and Gorard 2015b). Studies in disadvantaged neighbourhoods found positive effects on children's achievement test scores, teacher-rated academic performance and academic performance trajectories (Brotman et al. 2013) and also on teacher-rated parent involvement and parent-rated parent involvement for those parents with lower levels of involvement at the outset (Dawson-McLure et al. 2015). Positive intervention effects were also identified for parents' knowledge of positive behaviour support and effective behaviour management, and among parents of children with high levels of dysregulation there was a reduction in harsh and inconsistent behaviour management. There was no main effect on child conduct problems but there was a positive effect on conduct problems for dysregulated boys.

A follow-up of Brotman et al. (2013) looked at the impact of ParentCorps three years later. Although children's academic performance as rated by teachers decreased in both trial conditions from age 5 to 8 years, children in intervention schools performed higher than controls consistently over time (Brotman et al. 2016). For all three academic outcomes, the intervention effect was 1.5 to 3 times greater for children with the full versus a partial dose. On achievement tests, the effect reported previously on kindergarten achievement did not deteriorate significantly by second grade. In addition, relative to their peers in regular pre-school programmes, children who received ParentCorps had lower levels of mental health problems (externalising and internalising) in second grade. In short, children in ParentCorps schools had more positive trajectories for mental health and academic performance three years after the intervention: "Family-centred intervention during pre-K has the potential to

mitigate the effect of poverty-related stressors on healthy development and thereby reduce racial and socioeconomic disparities" (p.1154).

Midwest Child Parent Centers (CPCs), a selective intervention, were also developed and tested in the US, serving predominantly low-income families and designed to enhance early childhood in multiple domains of health and well-being. They provided intensive and comprehensive pre-school educational and family support services, including parent involvement and engagement – a menu-based approach comprising parenting education, volunteering in the classroom, attending school events and field trips, furthering education, and receiving home visits and health and nutrition services, including screening and diagnostics, meal services and referrals. There was a strong emphasis on quality, for instance by keeping class sizes small and providing professional development activities for staff. As with ParentCorps, CPCs were highlighted as promising in the See and Gorard (2015b) review.

A more recent study, involving predominantly low-income minority ethnic group children aged 3-4 years, found that CPCs had a positive impact relative to usual preschool programmes on all six school readiness domains as rated by teachers (oral language, literacy, maths, socio-emotional development, cognitive development, physical health) and the total school readiness score (Reynolds et al. 2016). There were equivalent rates of average daily attendance across both conditions but a higher rate in the intervention condition of chronic absences defined as missing ≥ 10% school days (although not when defined as missing ≥ 20% school days), possibly reflecting the greater economic disadvantage of the CPC schools. Rates of parental involvement in school as rated by teachers were higher for CPC families, and a higher percentage of CPC parents had high involvement in school. The study data were also analysed in relation to full-day and part-day attendance. This showed that: both groups had higher mean scores and rates of proficiency than the comparison group across all subscales; both had higher levels of teacher-rated parental involvement than the comparison group; and the CPC full-day group had a higher mean rating than the part-day group only for the parent-rated measure of parent involvement. In an earlier study of CPCs, relative to the control (part-day version) the full-day version had a positive impact on children's school readiness (in four of six domains: language, maths, social-emotional development and physical health), attendance and reduced chronic absences, but no impact on teacher- or parent-rated parent involvement in school events and activities (Reynolds et al. 2014).

Another selective school readiness intervention (KITS: Kids in Transition to School), comprising 24 group sessions for children to promote early literacy and social-emotional skills and an 8-session caregiver group to promote caregiver involvement in early literacy and school, had a positive effect on early literacy and self-regulatory but not prosocial skills when tested with foster children (Pears et al. 2013). An indicated version of the intervention, aiming to augment the early literacy, social and self-regulation skills of children with developmental disabilities and behavioural difficulties, reduced ineffective parenting and had positive effects on children's self-regulation – regarded as a critical

school readiness skill – at the end of kindergarten (Pears et al. 2015).[21] The study also found that improved parenting skills impact directly on parental involvement in school.

Learning at home

The four interventions in this category were either universal or selective (in the sense of operating in disadvantaged areas). They included two that shared information with parents via text, one that shared books with children and coached parents in how to read the books with their children, and another that promoted paired reading. Between them they were found to have positive effects on academic, other learning and parent engagement outcomes.

One of the universal interventions (READY4K!) involved sending parents of preschool children text messages to help them to support their children's academic development. There were three text messages per week over eight months, covering maths, literacy and socio-emotional domains: facts to inform and motivate by highlighting the importance of particular skills; tips for short and simple activities for parents to do with their children that build on existing routines; and growth texts to provide encouragement and reinforcement. Results showed that the intervention improved children's literacy performance, driven by increases in lower case letter recognition and letter sounds awareness (York et al. 2014). Parents in the intervention group reported engaging in more home literacy activities with their children than parents in the control group, and teachers reported that parents in the intervention group were significantly more likely to ask questions about their children. Overall, children who performed weaker at baseline experienced the benefits of the programme, indicating that it may have reduced some achievement gaps.

A shorter text message service, from Parent University, targeted families with young children attending Head Start or Early Head Start and sought to prompt mothers and fathers to engage in a wide range of activities with their children. Over a six-week period there were five daily messages each week (three suggesting an activity and two offering encouragement) based on weekly themes (literacy, maths and science). The evaluation found that intervention participants engaged in significantly more activities than comparison parents (Hurwitz et al. 2015). Specifically, more participants in the intervention group sang to their children, and results approached statistical significance for a number of other activities: more participants in the intervention group dressed-up or engaged in pretend play, told stories and described to children what they were doing. The intervention was particularly effective for fathers and parents of boys.

Raising a Reader (RAR) and Family Nights was a selective intervention for children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds that sought to promote school readiness through a parent involvement programme. Specifically, it aimed to: provide literacy-rich home environments; promote good family literacy habits; foster verbal interactions in the home that support children's language development; and connect families to educational contexts, including schools and libraries. In the RAR intervention, teachers prepared book bags to go home and parents were given a presentation about child development, the benefits of reading with children and the logistics of RAR. There was also a demonstration

[21] The effect on self-regulation was not statistically significant at the end of the school readiness phase of the intervention (which is part-way through the intervention i.e. before the transition/maintenance phase).

for parents of how to 'read' a wordless picture book. The additional Family Nights element involved parent instruction in shared reading techniques, childcare during the parents' instructional time, time for parents to practise the new techniques with their own children, and a meal. The intervention ran over a school year, with five family nights (one per month). An evaluation found that RAR by itself had no impact on children's oral language or print knowledge relative to services as usual but children in the condition with the additional Family Nights element performed better at the end of the year than the RAR group on receptive vocabulary, expressive grammar and memory for sentences (Anthony et al. 2014). Parents in the RAR condition reported attending significantly more family literacy meetings than parents in the services as usual condition, and those in the condition with Family Nights as well reported attending more family literacy meetings than parents in the RAR-only condition. There was no difference between conditions for how often they took their children to the library or expected to take their child to the library in the near future, the number of library services they took part in, the number of books they had in their homes, or the frequency of reading with their children. The combined model particularly benefited children who started school lagging behind in school readiness.

Last in this category was a universal seven-week paired reading programme. Parents of pre-school children committed to pair read at least four times a week, including twice at school where a coaching teacher observed and discussed ways to make improvements. Parents also took part in two small group sessions with other parents in the same preschool. A trial found that the intervention had a positive effect on children's ability to recognise more words and read more fluently (Lam et al. 2013). Parent-perceived child reading competence and motivation were also higher in the intervention group, as were the parent-reported parent-child relationship and parent self-efficacy in helping their children to be better readers and learners. Families benefited whether they had high or low income levels.

Communicating
No relevant studies.

Volunteering
No relevant studies.

Decision-making
No relevant studies.

Collaborating with the community
No relevant studies.

Other
One intervention that did not obviously fit any of the six Epstein categories was a selective intervention for parents of 3-4 year-old children attending a Head Start centre (Sommer et al. 2017). It sought to encourage parents to support each other and induce shared problem solving, thereby building trust and social capital over time. It aimed to do this by grouping children based on their home residence, so that peers lived closer to one another, thus making it easier for parents to rely on one another to help their children get to school. There was also the option to participate in a 'parent partnership' (voluntary or paired) – a

meeting to learn broad goals and socialise with other parents in their child's classroom. Once the partnership was established, parents were encouraged to get to know their partner and form mutually supportive relationships. Parents were also instructed to communicate with their partner if their child was going to be absent from school on a given day. Over a school year parents were invited to attend monthly centre meetings and report to the other parent (if they are not in attendance) about the meeting content. Monthly centre meetings, or Family Network meetings, were designed to: build connections among parents; enhance parents' understanding of how they can improve interactions with their children and support children's learning, including regular centre attendance; and serve as part of the Head Start family governance process (in which parents on the policy committee report on agency business and solicit feedback from other parents who are not directly involved with the committee). These meetings were intended to give parents a structure through which to increase social connection with other parents and with centre staff.

The evaluation found that parents who were offered the opportunity to form partnerships with other parents and whose children were assigned to classrooms where children lived near one another had a greater gain in their social networks and willingness to ask other parents for help compared to parents whose children were assigned to classrooms based on a Head Start business-as-usual approach (Sommer et al. 2017). Neither treatment (with or without parent partners) impacted on average child attendance throughout the year, although the programme was effective in improving children's attendance during winter months among a low-income population.

Primary phase

Parenting

The interventions in this category were primarily concerned with improving children's behaviour inasmuch as it affects their engagement and performance at school. Some of these involved collaborations between teachers and parents to ensure that strategies at home and in school are mutually reinforcing, or separate inputs for teachers and parents. Children were sometimes involved alongside parents in family sessions or received different input concurrently. Interventions in this category were mostly indicated, meaning that they targeted children at high risk who have signs or symptoms of difficulty. Outcomes within studies were often mixed, but collectively these interventions were found to have positive effects on a range of outcomes, including parent engagement and academic and related learning outcomes.

An indicated intervention called First Step to Success sought to help achieve positive behavioural and academic outcomes for behaviourally at-risk children aged 6-9 years and involved universal screening, a classroom-based intervention and in-home parent education. The evaluation showed that it improved several measures of academic performance and participation, with larger effects for academic engagement compared with academic competence and literacy level (Sumi et al. 2013). It also had a positive impact on some aspects of child behaviour, exhibited in higher prosocial and adaptive skills and fewer problem or maladaptive behaviours. A related indicated intervention (Tertiary First Step – an enhanced version of First Step to Success) was designed to engage families more effectively and improve parenting practices for children with extremely challenging

behaviour (Frey et al. 2015). Enhancements included school-based coaches supporting the child, liaising with the class teacher and coordinating other school and external services for the family, and the integration of motivational interviewing into the home-based element with parents. Relative to the comparison group the evaluation found positive effects on child behaviour and social skills at home and in school but no effect on student academic competence. Observations of intervention group participants only showed an increase over time in children's academically engaged time.

Another indicated intervention, called Coping Power, sought to prevent aggression in at-risk pre-adolescent children and involved group sessions for children (typically at school – before or after, or during non-academic periods) over a 16-month period and a combination of parent group sessions (usually at school) and home visits. Sessions were delivered by school staff (e.g. counsellor) and a grant-funded school-family specialist. A three-year follow-up study showed that it produced continuing reductions in children's aggressive and conduct problem behaviours and academic behaviour problems, and that parents became more supportive and warmly involved with their children (Lochman et al. 2013). It had been hypothesised that the intervention would have stronger effects in less disadvantaged and more socially organised neighbourhoods, but this was supported in only one of eight analyses; indeed, one interaction effect was in the opposite direction, with children who were growing up in neighbourhoods that parents' perceived to have lower levels of social organisation actually developing the strongest sustained decreases in their aggression and conduct problems.

Several studies evaluated Conjoint Behavioural Consultation (CBC – also known as Teachers and Parents as Partners), an indicated programme for students with disruptive behaviour in the classroom. It involved trained CBC consultants supporting parents and teachers to work together in pairs to identify child behaviour needs and then implement strategies in the home and classroom to improve the child's behaviour. Specifically, over an eight-week period there were four small group meetings in which teachers, parents and a consultant identify a child's disruptive behaviours that interfere with their learning, set prosocial goals and then develop, implement and monitor plans to address the identified issues. A study based in urban and suburban communities found that it had a positive effect on child behaviours at *home* (e.g. arguing, defiance, noncompliance, tantrums) (Sheridan et al. 2013). Significant effects favouring parents in the intervention group were also found for home-school communication (but not home- or school-based involvement) and parental competence in problem solving, although there was no effect on a family involvement total score. The increase in parental competence in problem-solving was greater for children in the CBC group with higher family risk scores, and the frequency of several disruptive behaviours (total behaviour problems, teasing and tantrums) was also greater for children from families with higher cumulative risk. Positive effects on children's behaviour in *school* and the parent-teacher relationship were identified in an earlier paper on the same study (Sheridan et al. 2012).[22]

A subsequent study, this time in a rural setting, found that CBC had a positive effect on several student behaviours observed in the classroom, namely on-task, off-task and

[22] This earlier paper was not identified in the search because its publication date preceded the 2013 cut-off date.

appropriate social behaviours as well as motor movements (Sheridan et al. 2017a). Meanwhile, teacher-report measures showed an improvement in academic difficulties (e.g. attention problems, learning problems) among students assigned to receive CBC relative to control group participants. The study also found greater increases in the CBC condition relative to control for teacher-reported teacher relationship with parents, and showed that the teacher-parent relationship partially mediated the effect of CBC on students' academic difficulties reported by teachers. The authors noted that this is consistent with the intervention theory of change, "adding further support that the notion that the family-school interface is pivotal for student outcomes" (p.49).

The same study found that CBC improved parent efficacy in helping their child succeed in school and the parent-reported parent-teacher relationship, as well as the use of positive parenting strategies and parent competence in problem-solving (e.g. setting goals for their child, identifying and implementing specific strategies that can be changed to help their child's behaviour, and gathering information to assess their child's progress) (Sheridan et al. 2017b). There was also a positive impact on aspects of children's behaviour at home, including aggression, noncompliance and temper tantrums, while gains in intervention condition participants' adaptive and social skills outpaced those of students in the control condition.

The final intervention in this section was Starting Strong, a selective/indicated intervention that aimed to prevent or reduce disruptive behaviour and school maladjustment in children with or at risk of behaviour problems at the beginning of kindergarten. It comprised 10 weekly group sessions for parents (supplemented with two individual meetings with the group leader) and four small-group consultation meetings with teachers. An evaluation by Eisenhower et al. (2016) found that it had positive effects on a range of teacher- and parent-rated measures of child behaviour. Positive effects were also identified for teacher- and parent-rated parent-teacher relationship quality and teacher-rated parental school involvement.

Learning at home

Interventions in this category were spread across the levels of prevention and ranged from the relatively simple to the more complex.

There were five universal interventions in this category, four of which were found to have a positive impact on academic outcomes. The first, a parent-child number board game playing intervention resembling Snakes and Ladders, improved young children's numeracy skills and interest in maths, and children of trained parents (not all parents received training in how to play the game) gained more than those of untrained parents (Cheung and McBride 2017).

The second, a brief group intervention for parents of 7-8 year-olds, was designed to foster parental involvement in children's writing and, possibly, to improve children's writing skills (Cultivating Writing). Parents were trained in a sequence for interacting with children on writing exercises, including giving praise and making suggestions. An evaluation showed that the intervention improved children's performance on some but not all transcription tasks, and some aspects of writing, notably text length and quality (but not writing fluency) (Camacho and Alves 2017). It had no impact on children's enjoyment of writing. The impact

on parent engagement was not measured, although the authors noted that parents tended to focus on text quality rather than on handwriting or spelling, suggesting that they prefer to provide feedback on creative as opposed to concrete aspects of writing.

The third universal intervention in this category, modelled after the original READY4K! (see York et al. 2014 above), was designed to help parents support children's early literacy learning. It involved sending parents three text messages a week over 10 months. The evaluation found that personalised messages (i.e. tailored according to child-level formative assessment data) had a substantial effect on student academic outcomes (reading level) above and beyond a general (non-personalised) texting programme (Doss et al. 2017). The personalised version also increased parent engagement in literacy activities with their child (e.g. taking books when leaving the house, reviewing parts of a book, reviewing the direction of reading, correcting mistakes while reading, practising rhyming) relative to the control condition (an increase for the general texting condition was non-significant). Unexpectedly, parent-teacher interactions improved more for the general text condition than for the personalised version; by way of explanation for this, it was hypothesised that the greater amount of information in the differentiated texts regarding child skill level, combined with greater success in implementing the differentiated activity, may have caused parents to visit the school less often.

Fourth for this category was another texting intervention. This one sought to promote the literacy skills of children aged 6-10 years by sending parents 18 text messages over the summer holiday. The messages encouraged children's reading and provided parents with tips about literacy development techniques and resources. An evaluation found mixed effects. Reading achievement scores were higher for the intervention group, with some measures approaching statistical significance and results over the school year suggesting sustained effects for one of two measures and incrementally increasing effects for the other (Kraft and Monti-Nussbaum 2017). Texts increased parents' attendance at parent-teacher conferences but not at other school-related activities, and there was no clear pattern of results or statistically significant effects on the frequency of parent's self-reported literacy activities (e.g. reading aloud, explaining new words, going to the library). Positive effects were concentrated among older children and the intervention was differentially more effective for African-American students. The authors suggested that while text messaging parents over the summer has potential, there is a need to address design and implementation issues in order to increase its success. For example, the frequency and content of messages needs to take into account students' progress and common barriers to parents supporting reading activities (e.g. health issues, work demands, holiday conflicts).

The fifth universal intervention in this category, Parent Academy, involved a series of 12 classes for pupils' parents plus an educational family trip, all designed to improve children's English and Maths attainment. The evaluation found that it did not improve attainment, even when parents were given a financial incentive to attend (Husain et al. 2016). Parent attendance at sessions was generally very low, but even when attendance was taken into account there was no evidence of an impact on pupil outcomes. However, participating parents felt that attending Parent Academy gave them the confidence and skills to engage with their children's learning more effectively.

Selective interventions for primary school children in the 'learning at home' category mostly involved working with families in low-income areas over the summer holiday. All were shown in evaluations to have a positive impact on academic and other learning outcomes. One of these, Summer READS, involved a book fair for students aged 7-9 years where they could choose 12 books at their reading level, a parent orientation (letter and outreach plan to encourage attendance), end-of-year classroom lessons on the programme for students, a summer check-in by teachers and summer book logs for children to return. Although the intervention had no effect on short-term learning – measures of reading fluency and retell over the course of the summer – it did have positive effects on an end-of-year standardised reading assessment (with older children performing better more consistently), suggesting some spillover effect into instruction during the school year (Stein 2017). Factors cited as possibly explaining the lack of effect over the summer include the extent to which teachers delivered lessons as planned and parents' understanding and use of the strategies.

Another summer reading intervention to reduce income-based gaps in reading comprehension, READS (Reading Enhances Achievement During Summer), entailed giving children books that match their reading level and teachers providing scaffolding for summer reading (e.g. pre-summer lessons, supporting material, family engagement activities, summer nudges). An evaluation showed that it increased the average number of books read by participating children relative to the control condition and also had a positive effect on reading comprehension scores, with effects strongest in high-poverty schools (Kim et al. 2016).

A subsequent study evaluated an adapted version of READS. Specifically, what was referred to as 'Core READS' was adapted for local use by teachers (making it 'Adaptive READS for Summer Learning'), meaning that teachers had more freedom to engage parents creatively. An evaluation of this selective intervention found that students in the adapted condition outperformed those receiving the regular version on a standardised reading comprehension score, enjoying significantly larger gains on average (Kim et al. 2017). They also read more of their matched books and were more likely to report that their books were appropriately challenging than students in Core READS schools, although there was no effect on self-reported total number of books students reported reading, self-reported enjoyment of books or total number of comprehension questions answered correctly. Attendance at READS family literacy events was significantly higher in Adaptive READS schools (45%) than in Core READS schools (35%). The authors concluded that "structured teacher adaptations may enhance rather than diminish the effectiveness of an evidence-based summer literacy program" (p.443).

The final selective intervention in this category targeted children and families who speak a first language other than English. It involved group sessions over 12 weeks for parents in which they received explicit instruction to help improve their own English literacy and to help them support their children's literacy development. The evaluation found that it improved children's vocabulary, especially among those with lower levels of vocabulary knowledge at pretest (O'Brien et al. 2014).

There were also three indicated interventions in this category, all targeting struggling readers and with mixed effects. Two involved afterschool activities with adjunctive parent

elements. The first of these, Doodle Den, involved after-school sessions for children and a mix of family and parent sessions. The evaluation found that it improved children's overall literacy and teacher assessments of their literacy ability (Biggart et al. 2013). There were also effects on some related learning outcomes, notably parent-reported child reading and library activity, and teacher-rated child concentration and problem behaviours in regular school class (although not parent-reported child literacy activities or children's general attendance at regular school). There was no effect on the sole measure of parent engagement, namely parent reading attitudes. Some of the effects were seen particularly for non-minority ethnic boys but there was no evidence that the intervention worked differently according to family affluence/poverty.

The other after school intervention in this category took place over seven months (four sessions per week) and targeted low-performance students identified by teachers as lacking appropriate parental support at home to improve their reading skills. It sought to help these students to enjoy reading and involved reading, stories and games (but no explicit reading training), plus a start-of-programme meeting for parents. Although the evaluation found that it increased participants' taste for reading (but not for maths or sport), it had no effect on reading or maths scores (Goux et al. 2017). There was a significant effect on teacher reports of parents attending the start of year meeting, but not on 'books are signed by parents'. Nor was there an effect on teacher-reported teacher-parent relationships, which included parents asking for a meeting with teachers and teachers asking for a meeting with parents; the authors suggested that this could be interpreted positively because such appointments usually indicate that there are difficulties with the child. There was a significant effect on children setting easily to work (as rated by parents), but not for other parent-reported items on student/parent behaviour (e.g. 'at home my child receives help from an adult', 'at home my child talks about school day', 'at home I sometimes read to my child') or on teacher-parent relationship (e.g. 'school has involved me sufficiently in my child's school life'). Two years after the intervention, students in the intervention condition were not more skilled in reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, spelling and maths than similar students who only benefitted from in-house school interventions, but they did not repeat their first grade more often. The authors suggested two possible reasons for the lack of effect on skills. First, literacy learning starts before children enter school, primarily through interactions with their parents, so "parental-type support at age 6 cannot act as [a] substitute for earlier parental support from birth to age 6" (p.25). Second, the intensive after-class intervention "comes necessarily with a reduction in the amount of help provided to pupils at school, by teachers, after class" (p.25). They added that increasing reading enjoyment is not necessarily followed by an increase in learning ability, and that "the early gap between lower-level and higher-level readers cannot be bridged by an after-class intervention designed to provide parental-type support to low achievers" (p.18).

The third indicated intervention in this category (SPOKES: Supporting Parents in Kids' Education in Schools) targeted parents of struggling readers. It involved 10 weekly group sessions in which parents were taught strategies to support their children's reading. The evaluation found no effect on standardised reading outcomes, or social-emotional outcomes, although in the longer term there was evidence of a positive impact on some aspects of reading for boys (Tracey et al. 2016). Nor were there statistically significant effects on self-reported parenting (including supportive positive behaviour and proactive

positive parenting). According to the authors, possible reasons for the disappointing results include a low attendance rate and the inclusion in the study of children with higher ability (making it harder to achieve change).

Communicating
Only one intervention fitted into this category at the primary school level. This was a universal intervention in which parents received automated text-message alerts about their child's missed assignments, low grade grades and class absences. The evaluation showed that it increased class attendance and reduced course failures, although there was no effect on standardised test scores or suspension rates (Bergman and Chan 2017). Further, parents became more accurate in their knowledge of their child's grade in maths and were more likely to contact the school, but there was no effect on the accuracy of parents' beliefs about their child's assignment completion or on parents logging in to view the child's grades. The positive effects on grades and attendance were larger for students with below-average GPA and students in high school. The intervention appears to change parents' beliefs about their child's performance and increases parent monitoring. The authors concluded that "this type of automated technology can improve student effort relatively cheaply and at scale" (no page number).

Volunteering
No relevant studies.

Decision-making
No relevant studies.

Collaborating with the community
No relevant studies.

Other
There were several interventions for primary school children that do not clearly fit any of the six Epstein categories.

Two of these were universal. The first, the Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management Programme, comprised intensive teacher training and coaching over a school year to improve teacher-student and teacher-parent relationships and increase teachers' use of effective classroom management strategies. The evaluation showed that it increased the likelihood of teachers rating parents as being in the 'High Contact/High Comfort' parent involvement profile at follow-up and of transitioning to more adaptive teacher-rated parent involvement profiles over time (Herman and Reinke 2017). These more adaptive profiles were associated with children displaying less disruptive/off-task behaviour and demonstrating better academic performance (including reading and maths).

The second universal intervention sought to encourage parents' reading behaviour at home with their children through providing information about social norms. The measure applied in the evaluation was completion of the annual 'Premier's Reading Challenge' (PRC), in which schools in Australia encourage parents to read 30 books with their children at home in the period February to August. The intervention involved class teachers giving parents

letters indicating the proportion of parents who had competed the challenge in the previous school year. The intervention was found to have a positive effect on the likelihood of children completing the PRC (76% intervention vs. 47% comparison), suggesting that schools should treat parents not only as individuals but also "as part of social networks who may very well pay attention to what other parents in their networks are doing" (Colgate and Ginns 2016: 1018-1019).

There were also two selective interventions in this category. One, called Families and Schools Together (FAST), aimed to build relationships among families within a school and involved eight weekly multi-family group sessions followed by 24 monthly parent-led meetings. The evaluation showed that it had no main effect on student between-school mobility, the main outcome of interest owing to its known association with a range of negative educational and other outcomes (e.g. test scores, drop out, self-esteem), although there were indications that it was more effective for Black students (Fiel et al. 2013).

The other selective intervention, Mind the Gap, sought to improve children's metacognition and academic attainment, and involved teacher training and workshops for parents and children in which they work together to create an animated film. Although the evaluation found no effect on attainment in numeracy and literacy, there was a positive impact on students' metacognition, which the authors suggested might in time lead to improved academic attainment (Dorsett et al. 2014). Participating families and staff also felt that the intervention enhanced home-school relationships and strengthened the child-parent learning relationship.

Secondary phase

Parenting

There were six studies of interventions seeking to promote parenting at the secondary school level. The interventions were varied in nature but the evaluations found generally positive effects on the outcomes measured, and in particular other (non-academic) learning outcomes.

Two of the interventions in this category were universal. One was a school-based curriculum for children aged 12-14 years, accompanied by training for teachers and parents. It sought to improve participants' social responsibility, which is known to influence their social and academic performance. A trial in Spain found that, relative to a control group, it improved several measures of social responsibility, notably children's self-discipline, commitment, attitudes and intentions (Carbonero et al. 2017).

The other universal intervention in this category, Parent University, also operated at the primary school level and entailed a series of free and voluntary workshops and classes over an academic year designed to share information with parents of school-aged children and build skills to better equip them to participate in their child's education. The subjects covered were parental awareness, health and wellness, personal growth and development and 'helping your child learn in the 21st Century'. The evaluation found a positive effect on unexcused (although not total) absences from school at the end of the academic year in which classes were offered, possibly owing to greater encouragement from their parents,

but no effect on reading and maths scores, arguably because these should be considered longer-term outcomes of parent engagement efforts (Portwood et al. 2015). Most parents (79%) who took part in Parent University attended only one workshop, despite efforts to make the intervention accessible (e.g. extensive advertising, teacher encouragement, variety of community locations and times, delivery in Spanish as well as English). The programme was somewhat successful, however, in reaching traditionally underserved parents.

The one selective intervention in this category focused on how parents can support their children's learning and was led by a head teacher in each implementation school (Avvisati et al. 2014). The intervention comprised three two-hour group sessions for parents living in a relatively deprived area: the first two focused on how parents can help their children by taking part in their education at home and in school, while the third session offered parents advice on how to respond to results from their child's end-of-term report. There was a particular emphasis on how parents can encourage children's effort by giving them praise, attention and rewards related to the behaviour that leads to school success. The trial, in France, found positive effects on parent engagement (parent understanding of school and involvement in classes), other learning outcomes (teacher judgement about child's attitude in class and involvement in work) and child behaviour (including reduced truancy and lower likelihood of being punished for disciplinary reasons). Regarding academic outcomes, effects were seen for teachers' everyday assessment but not test scores.

The next two interventions in this category were at the indicated level of prevention. The first of these, evaluated in the US, targeted parents of children receiving special education services due to emotional disturbances (Kutash et al. 2013). It used individual telephone-based support from trained 'Parent Connectors' (so-called 'veteran' parents) to increase parents' involvement in the educational and mental health services their children receive in the community. Calls were designed to be made once a week during the school year and to include *inter alia* emotional support, information about pertinent topics (e.g. methods to support academic success, special education procedures) and instrumental support (e.g. how to meet basic needs). A trial found mixed effects. The intervention contributed to children's greater engagement in school on some measures, for instance reducing the number of suspensions and increasing the length of their enrollment in school. Additionally, parents' involvement in mental health services increased, and children received more mental health services. However, there was no effect on parents' perceived benefits of engaging in education or their own engagement in their children's education – such as involvement on school activities or child education at home. Nor was there a main effect on children's maths and reading outcomes. Some child and parent outcomes were moderated by parents' level of strain [effectively the burden of caring for the child], with benefits favouring children whose parents were highly strained. Overall, the authors were positive, concluding that "Through the implementation of Parent Connectors, we found positive effects of the intervention on important aspects of child school functioning, increased involvement of parents in the mental health services their child received, more mental health services for the children, heightened effectiveness of the intervention with parents who are the most highly strained, and strong acceptance of the intervention by participating parents as well as the feasibility of implementing the program model with fidelity. These are important child outcomes that can potentially contribute to improve academic functioning

when the best evidence-based instructional activities are used" (pp.205-206).

The second indicated intervention in this category aimed to help parents of children aged 10-16 years who truant – 85% or less attendance in the previous three months with no legitimate explanation for absences – to understand the law regarding truancy and the consequences of failing to comply (Mazerolle et al. 2017). It comprised a family group conference involving the child's school and the police, followed by a six-month monitoring period at the end of which there was an exit interview. In addition to setting out parents' legal responsibility for their children's school attendance and the escalation of legal consequences – including punitive action – for persistent truancy, family group conferences were designed to explore issues such as what led to the truanting behaviour and to develop a child-focused action plan. The results of a trial in Australia showed that the intervention increased students' efforts to go to school when the parents believed that prosecution for non-attendance was likely.

Outcomes were much more disappointing in the final study in this section, which concerned a school-based family support initiative in the US comprising universal, selective and indicated elements depending on the child's needs (Smolkowski et el. 2017). The universal component involved disseminating evidence-based parenting information (in writing or in person), promoting school-home partnerships through activities such as parenting topic nights, and a system to facilitate early detection of difficulties and efficient referral to more intensive support as needed. The selective component comprised a behaviour monitoring and reward system designed to promote positive behaviour at home and school (including materials for parents on how to support homework). The indicated element entailed two brief family-centred sessions to motivate parents to change parenting practices and use intervention services that address their specific needs, followed by services as required (e.g. school-based supports for the student, family support programmes focusing on parenting skills, community referrals). The trial found no effect on parent engagement or any child outcomes – academic (maths and reading scores), other learning outcomes (attendance) or behaviour (social and emotional adjustment). The effect on some outcomes appeared to be moderated by student risk of behaviour problems, with at-risk students benefitting more, but the authors made little of this (the effect was only statistically significant for one outcome). Instead, they highlighted challenges with implementation fidelity, which was hampered by staff turnover in schools, cuts in school funding and a lack of school staff time to engage in parent support. Despite these generally disappointing results, the authors concluded that "Given that preventive interventions are generally cost effective, it is critical that researchers continue their efforts to refine these interventions and find ways to support schools' implementation of evidence-based programs that can reduce problem behavior" (p.103).

Learning at home

There were two interventions in this category, both of which involved communicating with parents about their child's progress. Evaluations of both interventions produced promising results.

The first, a selective intervention during a summer academy, comprised a daily phone call over five days to the student's parent from their English teacher. The evaluation found that

it had large effects on student engagement and behaviour (homework completion rates, classroom behaviour and participation in class) (Kraft and Dougherty 2013). During the calls, teachers evaluated the student's academic progress and classroom behaviour, described upcoming homework assignments and tests, and suggested something the student should continue to do well or try to improve on. Although between-group differences on attainment were not tested, there were positive associations between student engagement and student achievement.

The second, indicated, programme delivered weekly individualised text messages over four weeks to parents of students aged 14-18 years in a credit recovery programme.[23] There were two intervention conditions, focusing respectively on telling parents what students were doing well ('praise') and what students needed to improve on ('improvement'). The evaluation found that intervention students were more likely to earn course credits, almost entirely explained by a decrease in dropouts in the intervention group and driven by the 'improvement' information condition (Kraft and Rogers 2015). The intervention also decreased the probability of a student being absent from school, although it had no effect on teacher perception of student effort or behaviour, while students in the intervention condition judged their own performance (persistence, effort, engagement, participation in class) to be *lower* than did students those in the control condition (possibly because parents and students view any type of personalised communication as a cause for concern). Although there was no strong evidence that the text messages increased the *frequency* of conversations between students and their parents about school – measured as the extent to which students reported that their parents communicated with them overall, congratulated them, rewarded them, or assisted them with their coursework – the messages sent home appeared to influence the *content* of parent-student conversations about the credit recovery programme. Specifically, students whose parents received improvement information reported that their parents spoke to them more frequently about what they needed to do better in school compared to control group students, while students in the positive information condition reported no difference in this measure. Moderator analyses focusing on student characteristics suggested that the intervention benefited a diverse range of students, although there were indications that efforts to translate messages into English for parents who did not speak English may have had a particularly large effect on students who were also still mastering the English language themselves.

Communicating

Two interventions fell into this category, one of which was cited earlier (Bergman and Chan 2017). The other, for parents of secondary school students aged 12-19 years, involved sending text messages (about 30 in total) to parents about dates of upcoming tests, whether homework was submitted on time and what their children were learning at school. An evaluation showed that it had small positive effects on attainment in maths and English (in both cases equivalent to about one month of additional progress compared to other children) but no effect on science attainment (Miller et al. 2016). There was also a statistically significant reduction in absenteeism relative to the control group. Apart from intervention parents being nearly three times more likely than those in the control condition to talk to their child about revising for an upcoming test, there was no effect on

[23] A summer programme for high school students to earn credits in courses they had failed in the previous academic year.

parent engagement or the frequency with which parents talked to their children about what they learned at school, their attendance or their grades. The authors suggested that this may be because most parents in the intervention and control groups scored very highly on these outcomes, meaning that there was little room for improvement. The results were not moderated by any of the factors tested (Key Stage group, gender, baseline score, school size and EAL (English as an Additional Language) status).

Volunteering
No relevant studies.

Decision making
No relevant studies.

Collaborating with the community
No relevant studies.

Other
One intervention aimed at secondary school children did not obviously fit any of the six Epstein categories. It was a universal school-based science programme that encouraged students to have discussions with their parents about science-related activities. The main components were a monthly newsletter for parents, a learning journal for students with a 'Conversation with family' component, and a welcome event for parents focusing on how they could encourage their children to engage with science concepts outside of school. A trial found that it had a positive effect on parent involvement and students' interest and engagement in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) subjects, but no effect on grades (Heddy and Sinatra 2017). The authors concluded that "home-based interventions can be effective for generating positive student outcomes such as learning and achievement" (p.780).

Table 4.4: Nature of the interventions in primary studies for question 1b

Author(s) / Intervention	Target group	Level(s)	Epstein category/ies	Outcomes	Setting(s)	Type[24]	Amount	Implementer(s)
Anthony et al. (2014) *Raising a Reader (RAR) and Family Nights*	Children aged 4 years from economically disadvantaged backgrounds	Selective	Learning at home	Academic	School and home	Family literacy / shared reading	RAR: Number of classroom visits varies; these were tapered to every other week in 1 or 2 months until criteria were satisfied then monthly. Also 2 parent meetings Family Nights: 5 sessions of 1.5 hours monthly Study lasted 4 school years	University-based researchers, Texas Early Educational Model coordinator and teachers
Avvisati et al. (2014) Intervention name not given	Families of 6th grade students (c.11 years), primarily from deprived areas	Selective	Parenting	Academic; related learning outcomes; behaviour; parent engagement	School	Parent education / training	First school term of academic year: 3 2-hour group sessions spaced out by 2-3 weeks	School head teacher
Bergman and Chan (2017)	Middle and high school students	Universal	Communicating	Academic; related learning outcomes;	School	Texting	Various: average of 21 absence alerts,	Not reported

[24] Interventions have been placed into one of eight categories: parent education / training; texting; family literacy / shared reading; summer programme; pre-school with home visiting; multicomponent (involving inputs for two or more of parents, children and teachers); teacher training; and other. Some programmes could fit into more than one category, but in each case the category that seemed intuitively correct has been selected.

Leveraging Technology to Engage Parents at Scale				behaviour; parent engagement			average of 21 weekly missed assignment alerts., average of 6 low-grade alerts (sent if class average <70%)	
Bierman et al. (2015) *Research-based Developmentally Informed classroom program for Parents (REDI-P)*	Prekindergarten children [c.4-5 years]	Selective	Parenting	Academic; behaviour; parent engagement	Home	Pre-school with home visiting	2 school years (Autumn of prekindergarten to end of kindergarten) 10 home visits and 6 booster sessions in kindergarten	Home visitors from the local area with relevant experience and skills
Biggart et al. (2013) *Doodle Den*	Struggling beginning readers [5-6 years] from area of socio-economic disadvantage	Indicated	Learning at home	Academic; related learning outcomes; parent engagement	School	Family literacy / shared reading	Programme lasted the normal school year over a 36-week period. Maximum 88 child sessions, 3 1.5 hour sessions after school, 3 family sessions and 6 parent sessions	2 staff – a qualified teacher and a qualified youth worker or local childcare professional
Brotman et al. (2013) *ParentCorps*	Children at pre-kindergarten entry [c.4 years] from economically disadvantaged	Universal / selective	Parenting	Academic	School and home	Multi-component	13 after school 2-hour sessions for families Professional development	Mental health professionals and pre-kindergarten teachers co-led parent groups.

	background, serving largely black, low-income population						for teachers of 5 days (year 1), 2 days a year (years 2-4) and individual consultation (6 hours a year)	Teachers led pre-kindergarten student groups. Not clear who provided professional development for teachers
Brotman et al. (2016) *ParentCorps* (follow up of Brotman et al. 2013))	Children at pre-kindergarten entry [c.4 years] from economically disadvantaged background, serving largely black, low-income population	Universal / selective	Parenting	Academic; behaviour	School and home	Multi-component	13 after school 2-hour sessions for families Professional development for teachers of 5 days (year 1), 2 days a year (years 2-4) and individual consultation (6 hours a year)	Mental health professionals and pre-kindergarten teachers co-led parent groups. Teachers led pre-kindergarten student groups. Not clear who provided professional development for teachers.
Camacho and Alves (2017) *Cultivating Writing*	Parents of beginning writers (7-8 year olds)	Universal	Learning at home	Academic; parent engagement	School and home	Parent education / training	4 group parent sessions of 75 minutes over 10 weeks	Programme delivered by first author. Teachers did not deliver programme, but asked pupils to write stories for homework
Carbonero et al. (2017) *Playing to Think*	12-14 year-olds	Universal	Parenting	Behaviour	School	Multi-component	Length of intervention not given	Teachers and tutors. Mediator-instructor students

Cheung and McBride (2017) Intervention name not given	Kindergarten children aged 4-5 years	Universal	Learning at home	Academic; related learning outcomes	Home	Other	1 weekly 30-minute session over 4 weeks	Research team
Colgate and Ginns (2016) Intervention name not given	Grade 1 [5-7 years]	Universal	Other	Academic	School and home	Other	N/A (intervention comprised sending parents one generic school information note)	Researchers (short letter sent home to parents by classroom teachers)
Dawson-McClure et al. (2015) *ParentCorps*	Schools with a pre-kindergarten [3-5 years] programme and a student population greater than 80% Black and 70% low income	Universal / selective	Parenting	Behaviour; parent engagement	Pre-kindergarten	Multi-component	13 weekly 2-hour sessions	Mental health professionals and teachers
Dorsett et al. (2014) *Mind The Gap*	Year 4 [8-9 years] in schools in areas of substantial socio-economic deprivation and with a high proportion of students eligible for free school meals	Selective	Other	Academic	School	Multi-component	Teacher training: 2 teachers attended a regional 2-hour training Parent engagement: 1 weekly 2-hour session over 5 weeks	Teacher training: implemented by an independent consultant Parent engagement: practitioner employed and trained by the Campaign for Learning

Doss et al. (2017) *Extension of READY4K!*	Children at start of kindergarten [5 years]	Universal	Learning at home	Academic; parental engagement	Home	Texting	3 text messages sent per week over 10 months	Text messages designed and sent by research team
Eisenhower et al. (2016) *Starting Strong (in Kindergarten)*	Children with or at risk for behaviour problems at beginning of kindergarten [5 years]	Indicated	Parenting	Behaviour; parent engagement; other	School	Multi-component	14 sessions: 10 weekly group 1.5-hour sessions plus 2 individual 1-hour meetings (weeks 2-4 and 5-7) plus 2 monthly follow-up meetings	Clinical Psychology PhD students
Fiel et al. (2013) *Families and Schools Together (FAST)*	First grade [6-7 years] in schools where at least 25% families are low-income and at least 25% are Hispanic	Selective	Other	Related learning outcomes	School	Other	8 weekly 2.5-hour group sessions, followed by 24 monthly parent-led meetings	Trained team that includes at least one member of the school staff and a combination of school parents and community professionals from local social service agencies
Frey et al. (2015) *Tertiary First Step* (an enhanced version of the First Step to Success)	Students aged 5-9 years who show clear signs of emerging externalising behaviour problems	Indicated	Parenting	Academic; behaviour	School and home	Multi-component	Intervention lasted 60 days School component: 30 days of daily implementation, starting with 20 minutes and gradually	First Step Coaches and classroom teachers

							extended to the whole day Home component: 2-5 1-hour home visits over 6-8 week period	
Goux et al. (2017) *Coup de Pouce Cle (CPC)*	Low performance 1st grade students [6-7 years] identified by teachers as lacking appropriate parental support at home	Indicated	Learning at home	Academic; related learning outcomes; parent engagement	After school	Family literacy / shared reading	4 1.5-hour sessions over 7 months, plus a start-of-programme session for parents	Trained adult
Heddy and Sinatra (2017) *Use, Change, Value (UCV) Discussions with Parental Involvement*	Programme is universal, but the study involved middle and high school students [12-17 years] from moderate to high SES schools (28% financial assistance). Participants were students in biology and chemistry classes	Universal	Other	Related learning outcomes; parent engagement	School and home	Other	8 fortnightly sessions	Science instructors

Herman and Reinke (2017) *Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management Programme*	Children aged 5-9 years with conduct problems	Universal	Other	Academic; behaviour; parent engagement	School	Teacher training	Group training sessions of 6 full (7-hour) days, with 2 every other month Coaching sessions of various lengths and frequency, averaging 358 minutes	Trained teachers
Hurwitz et al. (2015) *Text message service from Parent University in addition to Head Start*	Participants with at least 1 child who attended the Early Head Start/Head Start centre [0-5 years]	Selective	Learning at home	Parent engagement	Head Start Centres [early education setting]	Texting	5 text messages per school week (1 a day) for 6 weeks	Parent University
Husain et al. (2016) *Parent Academy*	Years 3-6 [7-11 years]	Universal	Learning at home	Academic	School	Parent education / training	Over 7 months: 12 fortnightly sessions and 1 family field trip. First 2 sessions lasted 90 minutes each, subsequent sessions lasted 2 hours each	Parent Academy tutors
Kim et al. (2016) *Reading Enhances Achievement*	Elementary school children aged 7- 9 years; 39 of the 69 schools were	Selective	Learning at home	Academic; related learning outcomes	School	Summer programme	6 sessions for children and 1 for parents, all in summer	Child lessons: teachers Family event: research-

During Summer (READS)	high poverty schools						break between school years	recruited facilitators
Kim et al. (2017) *Adaptive READS for Summer Learning* (core treatment plus structured teacher adaptations)	4th grade students [9-10 years] in high-poverty schools (75-100% free or reduced price school lunch)	Selective	Learning at home	Academic; related learning outcomes; parent engagement	School and home	Summer programme	Lasted 4 months. Core READS Pupils had 6 lessons, at least X family engagement event, 10 books and texts. Teachers had a 2-hour training session. Adaptive READS pupils had at least 6 lessons and 1 family event, with a varying number of books and texts. Teachers had 3 collaborative researcher-practitioner meetings (initial one was 2 hours) and monthly teacher meetings (60-90 minutes)	Teachers
Kraft and Dougherty (2013)	Incoming 6th and 9th grade students (c.11 and 14 years	Selective	Learning at home	Academic; related learning outcomes; behaviour;	School	Summer programme	5 days, with sessions each day (length of	Trainee teachers

Intervention name not given	respectively) attending a 4-week summer academy. Largely low-income minority population			parent engagement; other			sessions not reported)	
Kraft and Rogers (2015) Intervention name not given	High school students in grades 9-12 [14-18 years] enrolled on a summer credit recovery programme	Selective	Learning at home	Academic; related learning outcomes; behaviour; parent engagement	Virtual	Texting	1 introductory call and 4 weekly texts	Research team
Kraft and Monti-Nussbaum (2017) Intervention name not given	Parents of children aged 6-10 years in elementary school (59% minorities and 63% students eligible for free or reduced cost lunch)	Universal	Learning at home	Academic; parent engagement	Home	Texting	18 texts (texts sent twice a week)	Research team via school's communication management system
Kutash et al. (2013) *Parent Connectors*	Middle school [11-14 years] students identified with emotional disturbances and spending at least 50% of the school day in a special	Indicated	Parenting	Related learning outcomes; parent engagement; other	School	Other	Weekly phone calls over 9 months (1 school year)	'Parent Connectors' – women ('veteran parents') with previous personal experience of social service involvement

	education setting							
Lam et al. (2013) *Paired Reading Programme*	Preschoolers [c.4 years] and their parents	Universal	Learning at home	Academic; related learning outcomes; other	School and home	Family literacy / shared reading	7 weeks, with 12 individual coaching sessions and 2 small group sessions. 10-15 mins for paired reading sessions	Teachers and parents
Lochman et al. (2013) *Coping Power*	31% most aggressive children in 5th grade [10-11 years] across participating school classes, as screened by teachers	Indicated	Parenting	Behaviour; parent engagement	School, community centres or research offices	Multi-component	16 months total. Group sessions were 40-50 minutes. Child: 34 group sessions (22 in 5th grade, 12 in 6th grade) plus bi-monthly individual sessions (30 minutes). Parent: 16 group sessions (11 in 5th grade, 5 in 6th grade) plus bi-monthly brief individual home visits	Child programme: co-led by school-family programme specialist and a school guidance counsellor Parent programme: delivered by 2 co-leaders
Loughlin-Presnal and Bierman (2017)	Pre-kindergarten children [3-5 years] attending Head Start	Selective	Parenting	Academic; related learning outcomes; parent	Home	Pre-school with home visiting	18 months, 16 sessions, 10 visits in child's Spring term and 6 booster	Home visitors recruited from local communities

Research-based Developmentally Informed Parent program (REDI-P)	classes in low-income families			engagement; other			sessions after child transitioned into kindergarten	
Mazerolle et al. (2017) *Ability School Engagement Program (ASEP)*	Students aged 10-16 years with 85% or less attendance in the previous 3 school terms with no legitimate explanation	Indicated	Parenting	Related learning outcomes; other	School	Other	One-off conference (mean 96 minutes, range 50-158 minutes) with an action plan (followed for 6 months)	ASEP police officer, three trained conference facilitators, at least one education representative
Miller et al. (2016) Intervention name not given	Secondary school pupils (11-16 years)	Universal	Communicating	Academic; related learning outcomes; parent engagement	Virtual	Texting	65 text messages over the school year	Teachers, administrators, project delivery team
O'Brien et al. (2014) *Family Literacy Program (FLP)*	Children aged 4-8 years and families who speak a first language other than English	Selective	Learning at home	Academic	School	Parent education / training	12 weeks of 3-4 2-hour sessions. Parents participate in 6-8 hours of instruction	A teaching team comprising 2 teachers (graduate students in literacy and language education) and 3 tutors attending various undergraduate programmes in the same university

Pears et al. (2013) *Kids in Transition to School (KITS)*	Children in foster care (and their carers) due to enter kindergarten in the following Autumn (i.e. 4-5 years)	Selective	Parenting	Academic; related learning outcomes; behaviour	School	Multi-component	Children: 24 sessions, 16 were twice weekly in school readiness phase and 8 weekly sessions in transition / maintenance phase. Caregivers: 8 fortnightly sessions, 4 in intervention phase. All spread over 4 months – 2 months before and 2 months after starting kindergarten. Sessions were 2 hours	Graduate-level lead teacher and 2 assistant teachers
Pears et al. (2015) *Kids in Transition to School (KITS)*	Children transitioning to kindergarten (i.e. 4-5 years) with a documented developmental disability that made them eligible to receive Early	Selective	Parenting	Behaviour; parent engagement	School	Multi-component	Children: 24 sessions, 16 were twice weekly in school readiness phase and 8 weekly sessions in transition / maintenance phase.	Graduate-level lead teacher and 2 assistant teachers

	Childhood Special Education services, and behavioural difficulties						Caregivers: 8 fortnightly sessions, 4 in intervention phase. All spread over 4 months – 2 months before and 2 months after starting kindergarten. Sessions were 2 hours	
Portwood et al. (2015) *Charlotte-Mecklengurg Schools' (CMS) Parent University*	Parents with at least one child who was a Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools' student [mean age 9.6 years, most frequent grade 2nd]	Universal	Parenting	Academic; related learning outcomes	School and community venues	Parent education / training	Not specified (voluntary choice for parents)	Collaborative initiative with a wide variety of community partners
Reynolds et al. (2014) *Child-Parent Center (CPC)*	Preschool children [3-4 years] in 11 schools, predominantly low-income families	Selective	Parenting	Academic; related learning outcomes; parent engagement	Pre-school	Pre-school with home visits	Daily preschool	Not reported specifically but likely various – including teachers and health and social services professionals
Reynolds et al. (2016)	Low-income, ethnic minority children aged 3-4 years	Selective	Parenting	Academic; related learning outcomes;	School	Pre-school with home visits	5 days a week, with 3 or 7 hours a day.	Education and family, health and social services

Midwest Child-Parent Center				parent engagement			Over a school year	
Sheridan et al. (2013) *Conjoint Behavioural Consultation (CBC)*	Students aged 5-9 years with disruptive behaviour in the classroom	Indicated	Parenting	Behaviour; parent engagement	School and home	Multi-component	8 weeks of 3-4 conjoint consultations of 45-60 minutes and 0-4 home visits	Consultants - master's level clinicians trained or enrolled in a school or counselling psychology graduate programme
Sheridan et al. (2017a) *Conjoint Behavioral Consultation (CBC)* [also known as *Teachers and Parents as Partners (TAPP*)]	Children aged 5-9 years with disruptive behaviour in the classroom in rural schools	Indicated	Parenting	Behaviour; parent engagement	School	Multi-component	4 conjoint sessions, lasting 45-90 minutes each and involving teachers, parents and consultants, followed by plan implementation	Teachers and consultants
Sheridan et al. (2017b) *Conjoint Behavioral Consultation (CBC*) [also known as *Teachers and Parents as Partners (TAPP)*]	Children aged 5-9 years years with disruptive behaviour in the classroom in rural schools	Indicated	Parenting	Behaviour; parent engagement	School and home	Multi-component	3-4 conjoint consultation sessions of 45-60 minutes. Average of 1e home visit over an average of 8 weeks	Consultants - Master's level clinicians in school psychology, special education or counselling psychology

Smolkowski et al. (2017) *Positive Family Support (PFS)*	Sixth grade students [11-12 years]	Universal / indicated	Parenting	Academic; related learning outcomes; behaviour; parent engagement; other	School	Multi-component	Dependent on child/family need	School personnel, including school administrators, instructional and educational assistants, school receptionists, and teachers
Sommer et al. (2017) *Child Attendance and Social Capital Project (CASPC)*	Parents of children aged 3-4 years attending a Head Start centre	Selective	Other	Related learning outcomes; other	Head Start centre (early childhood education setting)	Other	1 school year (9 months), with 1 group session and monthly centre meetings	Centre personnel
Stein (2017) *SummerREADS*	Children aged 7-9 years in schools serving low-income students (>80% eligible for free or reduced cost lunch)	Selective	Learning at home	Academic	Home	Summer programme	1 book fair and 2 book orientation lessons, with 15-20 minutes to choose a book. Parent orientations of various lengths. Summer vacation check-ins of various lengths, but aimed for 4	SummerREADS coordinators from the school and SummerREADS programme manager
Sumi et al. (2013) *First Step to Success*	Students aged 6-9 years with an elevated risk for externalising school	Indicated	Parenting	Academic; related learning outcomes; behaviour	School and home	Multi-component	30 consecutive programme days for students, including daily intervention and	Behaviour coaches (work with children initially, then teachers and parents);

	behaviour problems						feedback. Weekly 1-hour in-home parent education sessions for 6 weeks	classroom teacher (works with children and, to a limited degree, parents)
Tracey et al. (2016) *SPOKES (Supporting Parents in Kids' Education in Schools)*	Struggling readers in Year 1 [5-6 years] identified by teachers	Indicated	Learning at home	Academic; behaviour; parent engagement	School (recruitment) and other venues such as children's centres (delivery)	Parent education / training	10 weekly 1-hour sessions	Plymouth Parent Partnership (social service agency). Intervention delivered by pairs of educational psychologists and parenting programme facilitators
York et al. (2014) *READY4K!*	Preschoolers [c.4 years]	Universal	Learning at home	Academic; parent engagement	Virtual	Texting	3 texts per week for 8 months	Not reported

Table 4.5: Nature of the evaluation designs in primary studies for question 1b

Author(s)	Country	Study design	Unit of allocation (RCT) or matching (QED)	Control	Number of participants	Outcomes	Follow-up (beyond end of intervention)
Anthony et al. (2014)	US	RCT	Classroom / teacher	Services as usual (Texas Early Education Model: TEEM)	n=191 (TEEM, RAR and Family Nights), n=228 (TEEM and RAR), n=124 (TEEM only)	Oral language; print knowledge	No
Avvisati et al. (2014)	France	RCT	Classroom	Services as usual	Intervention: 96 classes of 20-30 students Control: 87 classes of 20-30 students	End-of-term reports; national and additional tests in maths and French; attitude in class and work involvement; truancy; disciplinary record; parent involvement attitudes and behaviour; peer-effects on behaviour and attitude	Yes
Bergman and Chan (2017)	US	RCT	School-by-grade level	Services as usual	Intervention: n=1137 students from 22 schools Control: n=1137 students from 22 schools	Number of classes failed; number of classes attended; retention in the district; state-wide standardised test scores in maths and English; assignment scores; grade point	No

						average; rate of suspension; parent beliefs about assignment completion and grades; parent contact with school; number of child's missing assignments	
Bierman et al. (2015)	US	RCT	Child	Regular classroom-based curriculum plus 4 mail-home packets of parent-child maths games	Intervention: n=95 Control: n=105	Vocabulary; kindergarten emergent literacy skills; reading fluency; children's academic performance (teacher-rated); social-emotional adjustment (self-directed learning, prosocial behaviour, aggression); extent to which parents read interactively with their children; parent-child conversations; quality of parent-child interaction	No
Biggart et al. (2013)	Ireland	RCT	Child	Services as usual	Intervention: n=311 Control: n=310	Child's overall literacy ability; word recognition; sentence structure; word choice;	No

						teacher's rating of child's literacy; attendance at school; concentration and behaviour in class (teacher-rated); parent reading attitudes	
Brotman et al. (2013)	US	RCT	School	Services as usual	Intervention: n=561 Control: n=489	Primary: achievement test scores (reading, writing, maths) Secondary: teacher-rated academic performance	No.
Brotman et al. (2016)	Portugal	RCT [3-year follow-up of Brotman et al. 2013]	School	Services as usual	Intervention: n=561 Control: n=489	Teacher-rated academic performance; achievement test scores (reading, writing, maths); mental health problems (externalising and internalising)	Yes
Camacho and Alves (2017)	Portugal	RCT	Child	Services as usual	Intervention: n=22 Control: n=26	Transcription skills; writing performance and story analysis; writing enjoyment; parent use of prescribed	No

						interaction sequence	
Carbonero et al. (2017)	Australia	RCT	School	Services as usual	Intervention- n=132 from 1 school Control: n=139 from 2 schools	Child social responsibility attitudes	No
Cheung and McBride (2017)	China	RCT	Child	Services as usual	Intervention: n=65 (of whom 23 had game with parent training, 22 had game without parent training and 20 had exercise book) Control: n=23	Numeracy, mathematical interest	No
Colgate and Ginns (2016)	US	QED	Class	Services as usual	Intervention: n=62 Control: n=62 Children from both conditions in each of two schools	Reading behaviour	No
Dawson-McClure et al. (2015)	US	RCT	School	Services as usual	Intervention: n=561 children Control: n=489 children	Child conduct problems; behavioural dysregulation; parent involvement in early learning; parent knowledge of positive behaviour support	Yes

						and effective behaviour management; parent positive behaviour support, parent harsh and inconsistent behaviour management	
Dorsett et al. (2015)	UK	RCT	School then class	Services as usual	Intervention: n=286 children (25 schools: 25 classes Parent engagement and Teacher training, 14 classes Teacher training only). Control: n=320 pupils (26 schools with 26 classes)	Reading; general maths and mental arithmetic; child-parent relationship; metacognition	Unclear
Doss et al. (2017)	US	RCT	Family	Control families received 1 text every 2 weeks that contained general district information and did not promote parent-child interactions	Total n=794 students randomised to 3 conditions (number per condition unclear)	Children's literacy development; district academic benchmarks; parental involvement in school; parental engagement in home literacy	No
Eisenhower et al. (2016)	US	RCT	School	Services as usual	Intervention: n=43 children and their parents	Behavioural adjustment; ratings of change in behavioural referral concerns; parent-teacher	No

					Control: n=43 children and their parents	involvement and relationship quality	
Fiel et al. (2013)	US	RCT	School	Services as usual	Intervention: n=1594 from 26 schools Control: n=1497 from 26 schools	School mobility level	No
Frey et al. (2015)	France	QED	Child	Services as usual	Intervention: n=33 families Control: n=22 families	Academic competence; pro-social behaviour (adaptive behaviour, social skills), academically engaged time) [intervention group only])	No
Goux et al. (2017)	US	RCT	School	Standard after-school interventions	Intervention: n=604 from 72 schools Control: n=309 from 37 schools	Cognitive performance in reading; cognitive performance in maths; interest in school and different topics confidence and relation to school; behaviour; grade repetition; results from national tests	Yes
Heddy and Sinatra (2017)	US	RCT	Class	Use, Change, Value (UCV) discussions with students alone	Total n=89 children.	Situational and individual interest; transformative experience;	No

				(with no parental involvement)	Intervention: n=3 7th and n=2 10th grade classes. Control: n=2 7th and n=1 10th grade classes.	parent-child conversations	
Herman and Reinke (2017)	US	RCT	Teacher	Services as usual	Intervention: n=901 students, n=53 teachers Control: n=917 students, n=53 teachers	Teacher-rated reading and math achievement tests; student-teacher interaction; social competencies; student behaviour; family problems; parent contact and comfort with school	No
Hurwitz et al. (2015)	US	RCT	Parent and child	Head Start programme without text messaging intervention	Intervention: n=119 Control: n=134	Engagement in a series of 9 parent-child activities (e.g. reading, telling stories, singing songs)	No
Husain et al. (2016)	UK	RCT	Child	Services as usual	Intervention: incentivised treatment n=569 pupils, unincentivised treatment n=679 pupils Control: n=905 pupils	Age standardised scores for Reading and General Mathematics, attendance level	No
Kim et al. (2016)	US	RCT	Teacher and child	Teachers in the control	6,383 children and 463 teachers	Reading comprehension;	Yes

				condition taught 6 maths lessons based on a problem-based learning framework	randomised into 2 groups (intervention and control); ratio not given	amount of home-based summer book reading routines; amount of summer book reading	
Kim et al. (2017)	US	RCT	School	Core READS: (provides students books that match their reading level and teacher scaffolding for summer reading)	Intervention: n=884 from 13 schools Control: n=743 from 14 schools	Basic skills reading comprehension score; school engagement; amount of summer reading; enjoyment of reading	No
Kraft and Dougherty (2013)	US	RCT	Classroom	Services as usual. Teachers were allowed to call students in the control group but did so less frequently than the intervention group	Intervention: n=69 students Control: 71 students	End-of-course and final-exam grades; student engagement in the classroom; homework completion; behavioural redirection and participation rates, teacher-student relationships	No
Kraft and Rogers (2015)	US	RCT	Student	Services as usual	Intervention: n=146 (group A), n=136 (group B) Control: n=153	Earning a course credit; effort; attendance; parent engagement and communication with child; teacher perception of their relationship with students	No

Kraft and Monti-Nussbaum (2017)	US	RCT	Household	Services as usual	Intervention: n=118 students Control: n=114 students	Reading achievement; attendance at literacy based events; student reading habits, parent involvement in student learning; spillover of intervention messages to siblings / other parents	Yes
Kutash et al. (2013)	US	RCT	Child	Control also received informational mailings 3 times during the study, but did not receive the Parent Connectors intervention	Intervention: n=66 children Control: n=62 children	State standardized test scores for maths and reading; number of days enrolled in school; number of days absent; number of times suspended; number of days suspended; parent perceived benefit of engagement with education and mental health systems; parent involvement in school activities; parent positive communication; parent engagement in child education at	No

						home; influence of social norms, perceived influence over education and mental health systems; student and parent engagement in mental health services	
Lam et al. (2013)	Hong Kong	RCT	Child	Services as usual	Intervention: n=101 children Control: n=94 children	Word recognition; reading fluency; parent-perceived child reading competence; parent-perceived child motivation; parent-child relationship, parent specific and general self-efficacy	No
Lochman et al. (2013)	US	RCT	Child	Services as usual	Intervention: n=120 children Control: n=125 children	Classroom behaviour (including aggression, conduct problems and academic orientation); parental warmth and positive involvement with their children	Yes

Loughlin-Presnal and Bierman (2017)	US	RCT	Child	Home learning materials via mail (instead of through home visits)	Total n=200 (allocation to intervention and control not reported)	Emergent literacy skills; academic performance in the classroom; self-directed learning; parent-child interactive reading; parent-child conversations	No
Mazerolle et al. (2017)	Australia	RCT	Child	Services as usual	Intervention: n=51 children Control: n=51 children	Child willingness to go to school; parent perception of likelihood of prosecution for students' non-attendance	No
Miller et al. (2016)	UK	RCT	Key Stage group	Services as usual	Intervention: n=29 Key Stage groups, n=7570 pupils Control: n=29 Key Stage groups, n=8127 pupils	For Key Stage 3: Access reading test; access maths test; science SAT papers. For Key Stage 4: GCSE English; GCSE Maths; GCSE Science. For both Key Stages: school attendance; parent engagement behaviours and attitudes	No
O'Brien et al. (2014)	US	QED	Child	Services as usual	Intervention: n=104 children Control: n=54 children	Vocabulary; phonological awareness	No

Pears et al. (2013)	US	RCT	Family	Services as usual	Intervention: n=113 (11 withdrew before baseline data collection, leaving 102) Control: n=106 (16 withdrew before baseline data collection, leaving 90)	Early literacy skills; caregiver rating of pre-reading skills; prosocial skills (play, social competence, emotional understanding); self-regulation; inhibitory behaviour regulation, emotion regulation	No
Pears et al. (2015)	US	RCT	Family	Services as usual	Intervention: n=107 families Control: n=102 families	Self-regulation (e.g. attention problems, aggressive behaviour); ineffective parenting, parental involvement in school	Yes
Portwood et al. (2015)	US	QED	Parent and child	Services as usual	Intervention: n=862 children Control: n=835 children	Percentile score in maths and reading / English; unexcused absences; total absences	No
Reynolds et al. (2014)	US	QED	Child	Part-day preschool	Intervention: n=409 children Control: n=573 children	School readiness (language, maths, socioemotional, physical health, literacy, cognitive); attendance; parental participation in	No

						children's education (school events and activities)	
Reynolds et al. (2016)	US	QED	Preschool	Services as usual (children enrolled in regular pre-school)	Intervention: n=1724 from 16 Child-Parent Centers (CPC) Control: n=906 from 14 non-CPC schools	School readiness (6 subscales: literacy, oral language, maths, cognitive development, socio-emotional development, physical health); child pre-school attendance level; parental involvement in education	No
Sheridan et al. (2013)	US	RCT	Classroom	Services as usual	Intervention: n=113 children Control: n=94 children	Child behaviour; family involvement in child's education, parent competence in problem solving	No
Sheridan et al. (2017a)	US	RCT	Classroom	Services as usual	Intervention: n=159 children, n=83 teachers Control: n=108 children, n=68 teachers	School-related student behaviours: direct classroom observation and teacher-rated standardised measures Teacher-rated parent-teacher relationship and communication	No

Sheridan et al. (2017b)	US	RCT	Classroom	Services as usual	Intervention: n=159 children Control: n=108 children	Child behaviour; parent problem-solving skills and parenting strategies; parental self-efficacy for helping child succeed; parent-teacher relationship	No
Smolkowski et al. (2017)	US	RCT	School	Services as usual	Intervention: n=21 schools, n=337 teachers, n=2602 parents, n=6457 students Control: n=20 schools, n=316 teachers, n=2401 parents, n=6455 students	School success (secondary school readiness); end-of-year maths and reading scores; , positive peers; child school participation; student risk; number of days absent; conduct and emotional problems; substance use; parental monitoring [of child]; parental involvement with teacher; parent school contact; family conflict	No (data collected for 4 years but intervention at school level continued throughout this period)
Sommer et al. (2017)	US	RCT	Classroom	Services as usual	Intervention: Geography only n=103, Geography + partner n=103	Child attendance; number of people in parents' social networks; number of people parents	No

					Control: n=101	were willing to ask for help in his/her child's classroom; number of people parents were willing to offer help to in his/her child's classroom; parents' self-efficacy; parents' loneliness; parents' psychological distress	
Stein (2017)	US	RCT	School	Services as usual	Intervention: n=2649 students from 20 schools Control: n=2232 students from 15 schools	Student reading level	Yes (for 1 measure, about 9 months after end of intervention))
Sumi et al. (2013)	US	RCT	School	Services as usual	Intervention: n=142 students from 24 schools Control: n=144 students from 24 schools	Academic engaged time (AET); social skills; academic competence; literacy level; improvement index; pro-social / adaptive behaviour; problem / maladaptive behaviour	No
Tracey et al. (2016)	UK	RCT	Child	Received books and newsletters	Intervention: n=402 Control: n=406	Vocabulary Letter Identification, Word Identification, and	Yes

						phonics, behaviour / emotional well-being, parenting skills	
York et al. (2014)	US	RCT	Parent	One placebo text every 2 weeks about the district's kindergarten enrolment requirements or required vaccinations	'Half' of n=1,031 parents were randomly assigned to intervention and 'half' to control	Child early literacy skills (parent-rated and test scores); early literacy-related parenting practices; parental involvement (teacher-rated)	No

Findings from the primary studies (quantitative analysis)

The study quality or risk of bias of the RCTs and QEDs included as part of the method to answer question 1b was assessed using 12 criteria taken from widely used resources developed by the Centre for Evidence-based Medicine and Critical Appraisal Skills Programme.[25] Responses were coded as positive or negative for each criterion, thereby allowing a score out of 12 to be calculated and compared across included studies, with higher scores indicating higher study quality. Where information pertinent to a given criterion was *not* reported, this was coded as a negative response. Results against each criterion are given in Table 4.6 and summarised in the far right-hand column of Table 4.7.

The primary studies included in this review tended to be of lower quality, with only 10 out of 48 included studies recording eight or more positive responses for the criteria. Eight studies scored three or lower, indicating that at least three-quarters of the criteria were not reported on or were or at risk of bias. As a whole, studies performed well on addressing a clear focused issue and fairly well on establishing equivalence between intervention and control (or comparison) conditions at baseline, accounting for all participants and treating groups equally aside from delivery of the respective intervention. At least 80% of studies were at risk of bias in relation to establishing the sample was adequately powered to detect differences in primary outcomes, establishing that allocation concealment was adequate and reporting that baseline data was taken before allocation. It is the case that on these criteria, as well as others and for individual studies, study quality was low scoring on account of not reporting information, rather than clear indicators of risk of bias. This is a shortcoming of applying health-related criteria to education studies, although it shows the need for improved reporting in the field.

[25] For details see https://www.cebm.net/2014/06/critical-appraisal/ and https://casp-uk.net/casp-tools-checklists/.

Table 4.6: Critical appraisal of the primary studies for question 1b

Author (Date)	**Addresses a clearly focused issue?**	**Adequately powered to detect difference in primary outcome**	**Randomisation method specified and valid**	**Allocation concealment adequate**	**Baseline data collected before random allocation?**	**Baseline equal or differences in baseline accounted for**	**All participants accounted for**	**Groups treated equally apart from intervention**	**Data collectors blind to treatment**	**Intention to treat (ITT)**	**Total attrition less than 10%**	**No differential attrition?**	Total (study /12)
Anthony et al. (2014)	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	6
Avvisati et al. (2014)	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	5
Bergman and Chan (2017)	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	5
Bierman et al. (2015)	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	10
Biggart et al. (2013)	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	8
Brotman et al. (2013)	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	8
Brotman et al. (2016)	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	7
Camacho and Alves (2017)	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	4

Author (Date)	**Addresses a clearly focused issue?**	**Adequately powered to detect difference in primary outcome**	**Randomisation method specified and valid**	**Allocation concealment adequate**	**Baseline data collected before random allocation?**	**Baseline equal or differences in baseline accounted for**	**All participants accounted for**	**Groups treated equally apart from intervention**	**Data collectors blind to treatment**	**Intention to treat (ITT)**	**Total attrition less than 10%**	**No differential attrition?**	Total (study /12)
Carbonero et al. (2017)	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	5
Cheung and McBride (2017)	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	2
Colgate and Ginns (2016)	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	5
Dawson-McClure et al. (2015)	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	7
Dorsett et al. (2014)	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	5
Doss et al. (2017)	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	5
Eisenhower et al. (2016)	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	6
Fiel et al. (2013)	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	6
Frey et al. (2015)	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	5

Author (Date)	**Addresses a clearly focused issue?**	**Adequately powered to detect difference in primary outcome**	**Randomisation method specified and valid**	**Allocation concealment adequate**	**Baseline data collected before random allocation?**	**Baseline equal or differences in baseline accounted for**	**All participants accounted for**	**Groups treated equally apart from intervention**	**Data collectors blind to treatment**	**Intention to treat (ITT)**	**Total attrition less than 10%**	**No differential attrition?**	Total (study /12)
Goux et al. (2017)	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	5
Heddy and Sinatra (2017)	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	3
Herman and Reinke (2017)	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	7
Hurwitz et al. (2015)	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	6
Husain et al. (2016)	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	10
Kim et al. (2016)	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	8
Kim et al. (2017)	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	7
Kraft and Dougherty (2013)	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	8
Kraft and Rogers (2015)	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	6

Author (Date)	**Addresses a clearly focused issue?**	**Adequately powered to detect difference in primary outcome**	**Randomisation method specified and valid**	**Allocation concealment adequate**	**Baseline data collected before random allocation?**	**Baseline equal or differences in baseline accounted for**	**All participants accounted for**	**Groups treated equally apart from intervention**	**Data collectors blind to treatment**	**Intention to treat (ITT)**	**Total attrition less than 10%**	**No differential attrition?**	Total (study /12)
Kraft and Monti-Nussbaum (2017)	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	7
Kutash et al. (2013)	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	5
Lam et al. (2013)	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	7
Lochman et al. (2013)	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	8
Loughlin-Presnal and Bierman (2017)	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	6
Mazerolle et al. (2017)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	11
Miller et al. (2016)	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	7
O'Brien et al. (2014)	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	5
Pears et al. (2013)	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	6

Author (Date)	**Addresses a clearly focused issue?**	**Adequately powered to detect difference in primary outcome**	**Randomisation method specified and valid**	**Allocation concealment adequate**	**Baseline data collected before random allocation?**	**Baseline equal or differences in baseline accounted for**	**All participants accounted for**	**Groups treated equally apart from intervention**	**Data collectors blind to treatment**	**Intention to treat (ITT)**	**Total attrition less than 10%**	**No differential attrition?**	Total (study /12)
Pears et al. (2015)	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	5
Portwood et al. (2015)	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	3
Reynolds et al. (2014)	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	3
Reynolds et al. (2016)	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	3
#Sheridan et al. (2012)	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	3
Sheridan et al. (2013)	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	3
Sheridan et al. (2017a)	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	5
Sheridan et al. (2017b)	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	5

Author (Date)	**Addresses a clearly focused issue?**	**Adequately powered to detect difference in primary outcome**	**Randomisation method specified and valid**	**Allocation concealment adequate**	**Baseline data collected before random allocation?**	**Baseline equal or differences in baseline accounted for**	**All participants accounted for**	**Groups treated equally apart from intervention**	**Data collectors blind to treatment**	**Intention to treat (ITT)**	**Total attrition less than 10%**	**No differential attrition?**	Total (study /12)
Smolkowski et al. (2017)	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	8
Sommer et al. (2017)	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	3
Stein et al. (2017)	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	4
Sumi et al. (2013)	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	5
Tracey et al. (2016)	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	8
York et al. (2014)	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	7
Total (criteria /48)	46	9	14	5	9	38	34	36	19	28	15	23	

The Sheridan et al. (2012) study was not reviewed for the project but it is included here because the Sheridan et al. (2013) study refers to it for a description of the study method, and it was therefore deemed fair to assess it against the critical appraisal criteria. In the event, the study obtained the same score on all criteria as the 2013 study. The scores for the 2012 study are *not* included in the total score in the bottom row of the table or in the calculations in the body text.

Table 4.7 provides results of a quantitative analysis of the primary studies assessed in this review. The principal summary measures used to compare included studies were differences in means. Differences between intervention and control group means reported at the first time-point after the intervention was completed were analysed. Hedges effect size (g), the standardised mean difference, was reported for each outcome measure category (Hedges and Olkin 1985). The effect sizes and 95% confidence intervals were calculated using the mean, standard deviation and the sample size for the intervention and control groups or, if any were not reported, statistics that could be used to derive these (e.g. confidence intervals). When two or more measures that assessed the same outcome category were reported in a study, the effects were combined into one composite effect for that outcome; we calculated the standard error for this effect in the usual way. In all cases, a positive effect size indicates the intervention improves the outcome. Where effect sizes and 95% confidence intervals could not be calculated by reviewers, brief narrative findings are reported as indicated in the included paper.

Consideration of the effect sizes from the included RCTs and QEDs published since 2013 shows that overall effect sizes tend to be small or minimal (Table 4.7). Due to the heterogeneity of different interventions and the contexts in which they were assessed, a meta-analysis was not considered appropriate. However, an inspection of mean effect sizes does suggest some trends. Effects on academic outcomes (mean g=0.11) are smaller than for the other outcome categories, namely other learning (g=0.18), behaviour (g=0.22) and parent engagement (g=0.18). Considering different categories of intervention, learning at home shows larger effects for academic outcomes (g=0.17), other learning outcomes (g=0.30) and parent engagement (g=0.29) than behaviour outcomes (g=0.13). Parenting interventions show smaller effects for parent engagement outcomes (g=0.13) and other learning outcomes (g=0.13), while other outcomes for parenting interventions showed similar effects to other intervention categories (academic outcomes g=0.11, behaviour g=0.24). Other primary intervention categories were not represented by studies where effect sizes could be calculated for more than a single study.

Consideration of the different age levels suggests that interventions delivered to secondary school students had smaller effects on academic outcomes (g=0.01). Interventions delivered in early years settings had similar academic outcomes to overall results, larger effects for parent engagement (g=0.24), but less impact on behaviour (g=0.10). Interventions delivered to primary age students had larger effects for behaviour outcomes (g=0.29).

Table 4.7: Effect sizes calculated for the primary studies for question 1b

Study	Age range	Sample Size	Primary Intervention category/ies	Intervention level	Academic outcomes	Other learning outcomes	Child behaviour outcomes	Parent engagement	Narrative findings	Study quality score (/12)
Anthony et al. (2014) *Raising a Reader*	Early years	352	Learning at home	Selective	g=-0.24 (95% confidence interval -0.47 to -0.02)				Parents attended more family literacy meetings than parents in services as usual	6/12
Anthony et al. (2014) *Raising a Reader + Family Nights*	Early years	315	Parenting; Learning at home	Selective	0.03 (-0.20 to 0.27				Parents attended more family literacy meetings than parents in regular intervention condition (RAR without Family Nights)	6

Study	Age range	Sample Size	Primary Intervention category/ies	Intervention level	Academic outcomes	Other learning outcomes	Child behaviour outcomes	Parent engagement	Narrative findings	Study quality score (/12)
Avvisati et al. (2014)	Secondary	~1,920	Parenting	Selective					Positive effects on French achievement. Attitude in class improved. Increased parent involvement when volunteering at school.	5
Bergman and Chan (2017)	Primary Secondary	2,274	Communicating	Universal					Increased attendance and reduced course failures, but no effect on test scores or suspension rates. Mixed effects on parent's knowledge about child's school performance.	5
Bierman et al. (2015)	Early Years	200	Parenting	Selective	0.12 (-0.15 to 0.40)		0.11 (-0.16 to 0.39)	0.01 (-0.26 to 0.29)		10

Study	Age range	Sample Size	Primary Intervention category/ies	Intervention level	Academic outcomes	Other learning outcomes	Child behaviour outcomes	Parent engagement	Narrative findings	Study quality score (/12)
Biggart et al. (2013)	Primary	621	Learning at home	Indicated	0.17 (-0.01 to 0.35)	0.14 (-0.04 to 0.32)	0.19 (0.01 to 0.37)		No effect on parent reading attitudes	8
Brotman et al. (2013)	Early years	1,050	Parenting	Universal / selective	0.15 (0.01 to 0.29)					8
Brotman et al. (2016)[26]										7
Camacho and Alves (2017)	Primary	48	Learning at home	Universal	0.46 (-0.17 to 1.10)					4
Carbonero et al. (2017)	Secondary	271	Parenting	Universal					Improved social responsibility in children.	5
Cheung and McBride (2017)	Early Years	46	Learning at home	Universal	0.14 (-0.48 to 0.77)	-0.34 (-0.96 to 0.29)				2
Colgate and Ginns (2016)	Primary	124	Other	Universal					Higher rate of completion of a reading challenge (involved parents reading at home with their child).	5

[26] Not included because the study is a follow-up of Brotman et al. (2013) and all other effect sizes are calculated at post-test.

Study	Age range	Sample Size	Primary Intervention category/ies	Intervention level	Academic outcomes	Other learning outcomes	Child behaviour outcomes	Parent engagement	Narrative findings	Study quality score (/12)
Dawson-McClure et al. (2015)	Early years	561	Parenting	Universal / selective					No effect on conduct problems. Increased parent involvement. Improved behaviour management at home.	7
Dorsett et al. (2015)	Primary	606	Other	Selective					No effect on attainment. Improved metacognition.	5
Doss et al. (2017)	Primary	540	Learning at home	Universal					Improved reading level. Some improvement in home literacy involvement.	5
Eisenhower et al. (2016)	Primary	86	Parenting	Indicated			0.27 (-0.15 to 0.69)	0.59 (0.17 to 1.02)		6
Fiel et al. (2013)	Primary	3,091	Other	Selective					No differences in whether participants changed schools	6

Study	Age range	Sample Size	Primary Intervention category/ies	Intervention level	Academic outcomes	Other learning outcomes	Child behaviour outcomes	Parent engagement	Narrative findings	Study quality score (/12)
Frey et al. (2015)	Primary	55	Parenting	Indicated	0.20 (-0.35 to 0.74)		0.95 (0.38 to 1.52)		After receiving the intervention, student academic engaged time improved on average from 59% to 75%	5
Goux et al. (2017)	Primary	913	Learning at home	Indicated					No effect on reading or maths. Higher taste for scholarly activities (notably reading). Few differences for behavioural outcomes. Little effect on parent engagement.	5
Heddy and Sinatra (2017)	Secondary	89	Other	Universal	-0.02 (-0.44 to 0.39)	0.61 (0.19 to 1.04)		0.54 (0.12 to 0.96)		3

Study	Age range	Sample Size	Primary Intervention category/ies	Intervention level	Academic outcomes	Other learning outcomes	Child behaviour outcomes	Parent engagement	Narrative findings	Study quality score (/12)
Herman and Reinke (2017)	Primary	1,818	Other	Universal					Academic performance and behaviour worse in the low contact group. More adaptive parenting in treatment classrooms	7
Hurwitz et al. (2015)	Early years	253	Learning at home	Selective				0.26 (0.01 to 0.53)		6
Husain et al. (2016) *Incentivised group*	Primary	1,474	Learning at home	Universal	0.01 (-0.11 to 0.12)					10
Husain et al. (2016) *Un-incentivised group*	Primary	1,584	Learning at home	Universal	0.00 (-0.11 to 0.11)					10
Kim et al. (2016)	Primary	6,383	Learning at Home	Selective					Small improvements in reading compre-hension. Increased amount of reading	8
Kim et al. (2017)	Primary	1,627	Learning at home	Selective	0.18 (0.07 to 0.29)	0.06 (-0.05 to 0.18)				7

Study	Age range	Sample Size	Primary Intervention category/ies	Intervention level	Academic outcomes	Other learning outcomes	Child behaviour outcomes	Parent engagement	Narrative findings	Study quality score (/12)
Kraft and Dougherty (2013)	Secondary	140	Learning at home	Selective					Higher student engagement and classroom behaviour. More productive teacher-parent communication. Teacher-student relationships also improved. Positive association between student engagement and student achievement.	8
Kraft and Rogers (2015)	Secondary	282	Learning at Home	Selective					Increase in course credits received. Attendance improved. Few effects on behaviour or parental engagement.	6

Study	Age range	Sample Size	Primary Intervention category/ies	Intervention level	Academic outcomes	Other learning outcomes	Child behaviour outcomes	Parent engagement	Narrative findings	Study quality score (/12)
Kraft and Monti-Nussbaum (2017)	Primary	232	Learning at home	Universal					Reading achievement improved (but only significant at 0.1 level). Mixed results for parent engagement	7
Kutash et al. (2013)	Secondary	128	Parenting	Indicated					Improved reading outcomes (only for children whose parents were most strained). No effect on maths scores. Child school attendance improved. No effect on parent involvement.	5
Lam et al. (2013)	Early years	195	Learning at home	Universal	0.37 (0.09 to 0.66)	0.72 (0.43 to 1.01)		0.55 (0.26 to 0.84)		7
Lochman et al. (2013)	Primary	145	Parenting	Indicated			-0.09 (-0.36 to 0.19	-0.04 (-0.30 to 0.23)		8

Study	Age range	Sample Size	Primary Intervention category/ies	Intervention level	Academic outcomes	Other learning outcomes	Child behaviour outcomes	Parent engagement	Narrative findings	Study quality score (/12)
Loughlin-Presnal and Bierman (2017)	Early years	200	Parenting	Selective					Improved literacy skills and academic performance. No effect on parent-child conversations	6
Mazerolle et al. (2017)	Primary Secondary	102	Parenting	Indicated					Increased parental awareness of prosecution likelihood, which in turn increased likelihood of child attending school	11
Miller et al. (2016)	Secondary	17,758	Communicating	Universal	0.03 (-0.01 to 0.07)	0.00 (-0.04 to 0.03)		-0.10 (-0.17 to -0.03)		7
O'Brien et al. (2014)	Early years Primary	158	Learning at home	Selective	0.27 (-0.09 to 0.62)					5
Pears et al. (2013)	Early years	219	Parenting	Selective	0.11 (-0.18 to 0.39)	0.07 (-0.22 to 0.35)	-0.08 (-0.37 to 0.20)			6
Pears et al. (2015)	Early years	209	Parenting	Selective			-0.28 (0.00 to 0.55)	0.12 (-0.15 to 0.39)		5

Study	Age range	Sample Size	Primary Intervention category/ies	Intervention level	Academic outcomes	Other learning outcomes	Child behaviour outcomes	Parent engagement	Narrative findings	Study quality score (/12)
Portwood et al. (2015)	Primary Secondary	1,697	Parenting	Universal					No effect on reading or maths. Improved unexcused (but not total) absences	3
Reynolds et al. (2014)	Early years	982	Parenting	Selective					Some improvement in school readiness. Higher attendance. No effect on parent involvement in school activities and events.	3
Reynolds et al. (2016)	Early years	2,630	Parenting	Selective					Improved school readiness. Improved parental involvement. Chronic absences worse than control group.	3
Sheridan et al. (2013)	Primary	207	Parenting	Indicated			0.45 (0.17 to 0.73)	-0.02 (-0.30 to 0.25)		3

Study	Age range	Sample Size	Primary Intervention category/ies	Intervention level	Academic outcomes	Other learning outcomes	Child behaviour outcomes	Parent engagement	Narrative findings	Study quality score (/12)
Sheridan et al. (2017a)	Primary	267	Parenting	Indicated			0.21 (-0.04 to 0.45)	0.32 (0.07 to 0.56)	Quicker improvement in academic difficulties (e.g. attention problems, learning problems)	5
Sheridan et al. (2017b)	Primary	267	Parenting	Indicated			0.30 (0.06 to 0.55)	0.50 (0.25 to 0.74)		5
Smolkowski et al. (2017)	Secondary	12,912	Parenting	Universal / selective / indicated	-0.02 (-0.07 to 0.10)	-0.03 (-0.07 to 0.01)	0.02 (-0.02 to 0.07)	0.09 (0.00 to 0.18)		8
Sommer et al. (2017)	Early years	204	Other	Selective					Improved school attendance	3
Stein (2017)	Primary	4,881	Learning at Home	Selective					Effect on reading in long- but not short-term (and more so for older children)	4
Sumi et al. (2013)	Primary	286	Parenting	Indicated	0.01 (-0.22 to 0.24)	0.37 (0.13 to 0.60)	0.24 (0.00 to 0.47)			5
Tracey et al. (2016)	Primary	808	Learning at Home	Indicated	0.09 (-0.06 to 0.24)		0.06 (-0.10 to 0.22)	0.05 (-0.15 to 0.25)		8
York et al. (2014)	Early years	1,031	Learning at Home	Universal					Improved literacy development.	7

Study	Age range	Sample Size	Primary Intervention category/ies	Intervention level	Academic outcomes	Other learning outcomes	Child behaviour outcomes	Parent engagement	Narrative findings	Study quality score (/12)
									Improved parent involvement in home literacy	

Conclusions

Broadly speaking, evidence for the effectiveness of parent engagement interventions is somewhat limited in terms of both its quality and the impact on outcomes (especially academic attainment). However, the evidence does highlight several areas of promise while also sounding helpful cautionary notes about some types of practice. In order to draw on this evidence to inform relevant implications for policy and practice, it is necessary to have a good sense of what early years settings and schools in England do and don't do currently – and why – to support parents' engagement with their children's learning. This is the focus of the next chapter.

Summary of key points

Critical appraisals of the included studies suggest that the eight systematic reviews are mostly of medium quality, while the primary evaluations (RCTs and QEDs) are of low or medium quality. This needs to be taken into account when considering the findings on effectiveness.

The systematic reviews found that for both pre-school and school-aged children the strength of the evidence for the effectiveness of parent engagement interventions in improving attainment is often weak, owing to a combination of issues with the quality of primary studies and conflicting evidence of effectiveness. Further, when effect sizes were calculated for the primary studies they were mostly small (and smaller for academic outcomes than for other learning outcomes, child behaviour and parent engagement).

That said, both reviews and primary studies indicate areas of promise in terms of improving one or more outcomes of interest, namely parent engagement, academic attainment, other learning outcomes and child behaviour. These include home and family literacy programmes, summer reading interventions (especially for low-income families), communication with parents via text messages, and structured targeted programmes aimed at improving children's behaviour and social-emotional skills.

Although adding parenting education services (typically home visits or parent groups) to preschool is not associated with programme impacts on children's cognitive or pre-academic skills, this appears to relate to intervention intensity and content, since interventions are more effective if they are intensive/longer and involve active learning rather than merely providing information about child development.

Brief parent training interventions designed to increase parent involvement in meetings with school personnel when children have a disability have no effect on parents' involvement in those meetings, suggesting the need for wider change at the school level to promote such engagement.

Chapter 5: What schools in England are doing to support parents' engagement in their children's learning

Introduction

The previous chapter set out what we know from relevant systematic reviews and subsequent primary studies involving comparison or control groups about what is effective in terms of interventions delivered by or in school settings to support parents' engagement in their children's learning. This chapter describes the results from new empirical research conducted with school leaders in England to find out how early years settings and schools currently support parents. This permits an analysis comparing what the evidence suggests is effective and what schools are actually doing. We also set out the results from an exploration with school leaders of the factors that enable and hinder effective parent engagement.

Findings from the survey

Sample

An invitation to complete the survey was sent to 5,696 schools. Fifteen schools opted out of any correspondence about the survey. Of the 337 people who opened the link and started the survey, 138 did not provide an answer to the consent question, 2 declined to provide consent and 197 consented to take part in the survey. Of the 197 who consented, 183 provided answers to (at least) the mandatory quota criteria. The 14 blank responses were excluded from the sample. We included four quota criteria to ensure the sample would be reasonably representative of the nine regions, different school categories, different phases of education and rural vs. urban locations. Schools were included as long as they met any of the four criteria (i.e. even if three quota were full, they could contribute under the fourth). We had 150 complete responses to the survey, meaning that all questions were answered.

Demographics and quota criteria

Table 5.1 displays the spread of the sample by the nine English regions. We had no responses from the North East, and fewer than the quota target for London and Yorkshire and Humber.[27] All other areas were well represented.

[27] Three local authorities (Westminster, Southwark, and Cleveland and Redcar) were initially selected for the North East and London regions but were replaced mid-way through the survey period because no schools in those areas had responded.

Table 5.1: In which region and/or local authority is your school located?

		Frequency	Percent	Quota target %
	North East: Hartlepool	0	0	5
	North West: Manchester OR Lancashire OR Cumbria	34	18.6	13
	Yorkshire and Humber: Kingston upon Hull OR Doncaster	9	4.9	10
	East Midlands: Derby OR Leicestershire	15	8.2	9
	West Midlands: Staffordshire OR Hertfordshire	30	16.4	10
	East of England: Essex OR Norfolk	36	19.7	11
	London: Lewisham OR Tower Hamlets OR Camden	8	4.4	15
	South East: Hampshire OR Reading OR Surrey	31	16.9	16
	South West: North Somerset OR Cornwall	20	10.9	10
	Total	183	100.0	100.0

Tables 5.2 and 5.3 display the types of schools that responded to the survey, and the phases of education that they represent. The survey was targeted primarily at Local Authority maintained schools and academies or free schools (98% combined); only 3 responses were from an independent or special school. The majority of responses were also primary schools (76.5%) and we did not meet the target quota (45%) for secondary schools or nursery/early years institutions (10%), reducing the precision of our estimates for these schools.

Table 5.2: How is your school categorised?

		Frequency	Percent	Quota target %
	Local Authority Maintained	118	64.5	
	Academy or Free School	62	33.9	90
	Independent	2	1.1	
	Special School	1	0.5	10
	Total	183	100.0	100.0

Table 5.3: What phase of education do you deal with?

	Frequency	Percent	Quota target %
Nursery alone	8	4.4	10
Primary (or primary and Nursery together)	140	76.5	45
Secondary	30	16.4	45
All Through or Not applicable	5	2.7	
Total	183	100.0	100.0

The survey achieved a reasonable representation of schools in urban and rural areas, although the low response from London schools meant that the target quota for urban schools was not met (Table 5.4). The sample is also skewed by responses from schools with outstanding or good Ofsted assessments (Table 5.5); this is largely a consequence of having a high percentage of primary schools in the sample which are more likely than secondary schools to be rated as good schools. Nationally, only 6% of schools are classified as 'outstanding' and 30% of schools achieve a 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate' rating from Ofsted; only 11% of survey responses were from schools in those categories. There was, however, a good split of schools with the percentage of children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) above (46%) and below (51%) the national average of 14% (Table 5.6).

Table 5.4: Is the catchment area of your school considered mainly rural or urban?

	Frequency	Percent	Quota target %
RURAL, including rural hamlets and isolated dwellings, rural villages, rural towns and fringe.	64	35.0	28
URBAN, including city and town, minor conurbation, and major conurbation.	119	65.0	72
Total	183	100.0	100.0

Table 5.5: In your latest Ofsted Report, how is your school's performance classified?

	Frequency	Secondary schools (N)	Percent
Grade 1 (outstanding)	54	9	29.5
Grade 2 (good)	109	16	59.6
Grade 3 (requires improvement)	17	4	9.3
Grade 4 (inadequate)	3	1	1.6
Total	183	30	100.0

Table 5.6: Is the percentage of children at your school who are eligible for free school meals (not including universal KS1 provision) 14% or more?

	Frequency	Secondary schools (N)	Percent
No response	2	1	1.1
Yes	85	16	46.4
No	94	13	51.4
Not sure	2	0	1.1
Total	183	30	100.0

At primary level, the average state-funded school now has 279 students on its roll. The average secondary school in England has 946 students enrolled. Schools that responded to the survey were on average in the 251-350 students range; secondary schools were on average larger, with more than 750 children (Table 5.7).

Table 5.7: How many children are enrolled at your school?

	Frequency	Secondary schools (N)	Percent
No response	4	2	2.2
1-100	17	0	9.3
101-250	62	0	33.9
251-350	27	0	14.8
351-500	38	1	20.8
501-750	12	4	6.6
751-950	7	7	3.8
951 or more	16	16	8.7
Total	183	30	100.0

Policies, procedures and priorities

The survey asked respondents to indicate what policies and procedures they had in place to support parents' engagement in their children's learning. While the majority of schools (72%) did not have a written policy in place around engagement applied to all parents/carers, most respondents (80%) did consider parent engagement to be the responsibility of all staff (Table 5.8). Approximately one-third (31%) of school leaders said that they have someone nominated with a lead role for parent engagement, and for most schools this was either one of the leadership team (e.g. Head teacher, Deputy or Assistant Head) or a Family Link or Support worker. A similar percentage (34%) had a formal policy for engaging parents from socially disadvantaged background (Table 5.9).

Table 5.8: Is there an individual at your school or institution responsible for 'parent/carer engagement and involvement' as defined above? MORE THAN ONE OPTION MAY APPLY

N = 167	Frequency	Percent
There is no-one specifically tasked with this role	33	19.7
Parent involvement is the responsibility of all school staff	134	80.2
There is an individual member of staff responsible BUT only for working with parents of children who are struggling academically and/or who have additional needs	13	7.8
There is an individual member of staff responsible or with a lead role for parent engagement generally	51	30.5
Don't know/Not sure	2	1.2

Table 5.9: Does your school have any policies or procedures aimed specifically at engaging parents from socially disadvantaged backgrounds?

	Frequency	Percent
No response	16	8.7
No	102	55.7
Not sure	3	1.6
Yes	62	33.9
Total	183	100.0

School-community partnerships are collaborations between schools and community-based organisations and agencies with the purpose of raising children's attainment by building the social capital needed to support students. There is a wide range of things that might be considered a school-community partnership but, in the UK, this might include: reading and library schemes, for example Achievement For All;[28] family and adult education classes, for example maths or cooking; events in old people's homes, local church or parish connections; and community cafés and schemes. Just over two-fifths (42%) of schools were reported to be engaging in these partnerships (Table 5.10).

[28] https://afaeducation.org/

Table 5.10: Does your school have any school-community partnerships to promote the engagement of parents in their child's learning? By this, we mean intentional efforts to create long-standing relationships among schools and organisations in the local community.

	Frequency	Percent
No response	16	8.7
Yes	77	42.1
No	82	44.8
Not sure	8	4.4
Total	183	100.0

Finally, in this section, survey respondents were asked to rank five activities related to improving children's attainment, according to how much they were a priority for the school. The activities most commonly rated as top priority were those to enhance workforce/staff development, followed closely by one-to-one work with students who are struggling (Table 5.11). Activities to provide ICT (information and communication technology) were the lowest priority, and activities to engage parents in children's learning at home or in school were in the middle.

Table 5.11: Please rank the following activities according to their priority at your school, where 1 is the HIGHEST priority and 5 is the LOWEST priority

N = 167	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Activities to enhance workforce development and quality of teaching, i.e. staff training	84	37	27	13	6
Activities (one-to-one or small groups) to work with selected children who are struggling with their learning or have additional needs	37	73	36	19	2
Activities to engage all parents/carers in children's learning at home or in school	33	35	61	32	6
Activities to target or improve behaviour, discipline and/or classroom management	19	25	32	71	20
Activities to fundraise for and/or provide information and communication technology (ICT)	4	4	7	24	128
*	177	174	163	159	162

* Some respondents did not follow instructions and endorsed more items as priority 1 or 2, and did not award a 3-5 priority ranking.

Parent engagement activity

As outlined in Chapter 1, we have used Joyce Epstein's framework of parent involvement to conceptualise how schools support parents. Table 5.12 below displays the responses to each of six engagement categories: parenting; communicating; learning at home; volunteering;

decision-making; and collaborating with the community. Respondents were asked to indicate which activities applied in their schools.

Around two-thirds of schools (68%, 95%CI: 61-75%) offer some form of parenting support activity, a similar proportion (67%, 95%CI: 59-74%) offer home visits at key transition points, and just over half offer parent education and suggestions for things to do at home to support learning respectively. Interestingly, given the response to school-community partnerships above, fewer than 10% of schools were reported to undertake neighbourhood meetings to engage with families. Communication activity, in the form of meetings at least once a year and regular notices either by letter, text or social media, was endorsed by almost all respondents (96%, 95%CI: 92-99%). Respondents were less likely to endorse sending children's work home for parents to see and comment on but the majority reported using regular homework that requires children and parents to discuss what they are learning in class (74%, 95%CI: 67-81%). Less than a third of schools were said to send home summer learning materials or activities and only one-fifth reportedly work with families on setting learning goals for children (20%, 95%CI: 14-26%).

Most schools (73%, 95%CI: 67-80%) involved parents as school and classroom volunteers, but only around half communicated these activities and opportunities to families (57%, 95%CI: 50-65%) and fewer reported actively surveying families to discover what they could offer (18%, 95%CI: 12-24%). Most schools reported providing information about how parents could become governors (83%, 95%CI: 77-89%) or engaging parents via Parent Teacher Association (PTA) committees and councils. At least two-thirds of schools provide families with information on community activities that link to learning skills and talents, including summer activities for children (71%, 95%CI: 64-78%) and around a quarter of schools said that they had service integration partnerships and collaborations with civic, cultural, health, recreation, businesses and other organisations.

Table 5.12: How schools support parents according to the Epstein categories

N = 161	Number endorsing	Percent	95% CI
1. Parenting: this refers to activities to help all families establish home environments to support children as learners			
Family support programmes or services to assist families with health, nutrition or behaviour	109	67.7	60.6-74.8
Home visits at transition points to pre-school, primary school, secondary school and college	107	66.5	59.3-73.7
Parent education and other courses or training for parents (e.g. family literacy, formal tests/exams)	87	54	46.4-61.6
Suggestions for home conditions that support learning at each year group level	84	52.2	44.6-59.8
Videos, automated phone messages or texts on parenting at each year group level	30	18.6	12.7-24.5
Other (please describe)	26	16.1	10.5-21.7
Neighbourhood meetings to help families understand schools and to help schools understand families	15	9.3	4.9-13.7
2. Communicating: this refers to activities designed to help with school-to-home and home-to-school communication about school activities and children's progress			
Meetings with every parent at least once a year, with follow-ups as needed	157	97.5	95.1-99.9
Regular schedule of useful notices, memos, phone calls, newsletters, texts, social media and other communications	154	95.7	92.6-98.8
Sending home a report on the child's progress and how they can improve their learning and attainment	150	93.2	89.3-97.1
Clear information on all school policies, activities, reforms and transitions	134	83.2	77.4-89.0
Clear information on choosing schools or courses, and activities within schools	80	49.7	42.0-57.4
Language translators to assist families as needed	68	42.2	34.6-49.8
Weekly or monthly folders of children's work sent home for review and comments	32	19.9	13.7-26.1
Other (please describe)	14	8.7	4.4-13.0
3. Learning at home: this refers to activities providing information and ideas to families about how to help children at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions and planning			
Regular schedule of homework that requires students to discuss and interact with families on what they are learning in class	119	73.9	67.1-80.7
Information on homework policies and how to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home	114	70.8	63.8-77.8
Information for families on skills required for children in all subjects in each year group	110	68.3	61.1-75.5
Information on how to assist children to improve skills on various class and school assessments	105	65.2	57.9-72.5

N = 161	Number endorsing	Percent	95% CI
Activities for parents and students at home	95	59.0	51.4-66.6
Family maths, science, and reading activities at school	76	47.2	39.5-54.9
Summer learning materials or activities	52	32.3	25.1-39.5
Family participation in setting children's learning goals each year and in planning for college or work	32	19.9	13.7-26.1
Other (please describe)	5	3.1	0.4-5.8
4. Volunteering: this refers to activities to recruit and organise parent help and support			
School and classroom volunteer activities for parents to help teachers, administrators, children and other parents	118	73.3	66.5-80.1
Communications with parents on how they can help and what they need to do	92	57.1	49.5-64.7
Parent room or family centre for volunteer work, meetings, resources for families	29	18.0	12.1-23.9
Annual survey to identify all available talents, times and locations of volunteers	29	18.0	12.1-23.9
Parent patrols or other activities to aid the safety and operation of school activities	17	10.6	5.9-15.3
Other (please describe)	15	9.3	4.8-13.8
5. Decision making: this refers to activities to include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives			
Information on how parents can become school governors	134	83.2	77.4-89
Active PTA [Parent Teacher Association] or other parent organisations, advisory councils, or committees (e.g. curriculum, safety, personnel) for parent leadership and participation	128	79.5	73.3-85.7
Networks to link all families with parent governors / other parent representatives	31	19.3	13.2-25.4
District-level councils and committees for family and community involvement	9	5.6	2.1-9.1
Other (please describe)	8	5.0	1.6-8.4
Independent advocacy groups to lobby and work for school reform and improvements	7	4.3	1.2-7.4
6. Collaborating with the community: This refers to activities to identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school activities, family practices and children's learning and development			
Information on community activities that link to learning skills and talents, including summer activities for children	115	71.4	64.4-78.4
Information for students and families on community health, cultural, recreational, social support, and other activities or services	107	66.5	59.2-73.8
Service to the community by children, families and schools (e.g. recycling, art, music, drama, volunteering)	73	45.3	37.6-53
Service integration through partnerships involving school (civic, cultural, health, recreation, businesses and other organisations)	43	26.7	19.9-33.5

N = 161	Number endorsing	Percent	95% CI
Participation of alumni in school activities for children	25	15.5	9.9-21.1
Other (please describe)	2	1.2	-0.5-2.9

The survey asked respondents to comment on any item they endorsed in the Epstein framework and to provide the name of schemes, programmes or initiatives they were using. For the most part, respondents offered generic terms for the things they do (e.g. parent advisor, or parenting workshops) but some packaged interventions were mentioned in relation to parenting skills support, for example: The Solihull Approach; Strengthening Families/Strengthening Communities; Triple-P; and Family Links. All of these have evaluation evidence and are based on similar underlying theoretical models (Social Learning Theory). In addition, respondents reported that their schools were running lifestyle and well-being courses or programmes focused on cookery and healthy eating (e.g. Big Cook, Little Cook) and/or promoting active lifestyles (e.g. HENRY), and emotional resilience (e.g. EMBRACE).

A range of generic information was mentioned as regards activity to support 'Learning at home', for example curriculum booklets, early phonics, and SATS [national end of Key Stage Tests and Assessments taken by children in Years 2 and 6] and Year 10/11 revision. Respondents did point to some packaged literacy programmes that they implement, although these are almost exclusively programmes for the early years and foundation stage, for example: Early Words Together; Parent2Parent; and PEEP Learning Together. Some of the reading club programmes (e.g. Chatterbooks) stretch into the later primary years but no packaged interventions for secondary school children were mentioned.

Examples of named interventions cited by school leaders are described in Table 5.13. The final column shows that only a small minority have been subject to an experimental or quasi-experimental evaluation, and of those that have only one (Triple P, or selected versions thereof) reaches Level 3 on the standards of evidence applied by the Early Intervention Foundation for their online Guidebook of early intervention programmes.

At the end of the Activities section, the survey asked respondents to indicate the type/purpose of the activities they undertake to support parents' engagement in children's learning, and to rank the top five priorities. Table 5.14 displays the number of respondents who endorsed each type of activity as well as the most common rank for each. Although the most frequently endorsed type of activity was to give parents information about what children are learning at school and their child's progress (89%), these only ranked second and third as priorities. The most commonly cited top priorities were training or support provided to parents, and training and support provided to teachers. However, only a third (37%) of respondents reported that their schools were providing training to teachers about how to engage parents. Few schools were reported to rely on activities promoting social norms, that is telling parents what other families do to support children's learning (16%), although it ranked highly as a priority for those for which it was endorsed.

Table 5.13: Parent engagement interventions used in schools according to survey respondents

Intervention name[29]	**Education phase(s)**[30]	**Prevention level(s)**	**Epstein category (primary)**	**Brief description**	**Evidence rating (EIF Level 3 or above)**[31]
Achievement for All programmes#	Early Years Primary Secondary	Universal Selective Indicated	Decision making	Programmes tailored to the needs of the schools, staff and pupils to improve children's development and achievement. There is a focus on engaging parents in learning at home, decision making and school improvement	No relevant evaluation
Cafés for All	Primary	Universal	Learning at home	Informal pop-up café environment in a school or similar setting, attended by both pupils and parents to create a learning environment	No relevant evaluation
Call Parents#	Early Years Primary	Universal	Communicating	Secure system that allows texts and emails	No relevant evaluation

[29] A # in this column indicates that the intervention has a website and that this is listed below.

[30] Interventions will not necessarily cover all ages within a given education phase, and where multiple phases are listed there may be different versions of the intervention for children of different ages.

[31] An asterisk in this column indicates that the intervention is listed on the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) Guidebook: http://guidebook.eif.org.uk. 'No relevant evaluation' means that the intervention has not been evaluated by RCT or a QED study, meaning that it cannot achieve Level 3. 'Yes' means that it has been evaluated using a relevant method and found by the EIF to meet or exceed Level 3. 'No' means that it has been evaluated through the relevant method but was found by the EIF not to meet Level 3. 'Potentially' means that it has been evaluated using a relevant method, with a positive effect, but it has not been assessed formally by the EIF.

	Secondary			to communicate between the school and parents	
Chatterbooks[#]	Primary	Universal Selective Indicated	Learning at home	Reading clubs aimed at children to increase reading for pleasure. Pupils read and discuss an appropriate age-level book	No relevant evaluation
Churchill Music![#]	Primary Secondary	Universal	Collaborating with the community	A charity that provides musical concerts for discounted prices for school children and parents as well as workshops for school children	No relevant evaluation
ClassDojo[#]	Primary Secondary	Universal	Communicating	An app through which teachers and students can share information, photos and videos with parents. There are also classroom tools for teachers	No relevant evaluation
Developing Experts[#]	Primary Secondary	Universal	Learning at home	Online learning resources for parents, students and teachers for science	No relevant evaluation
Early Words Together[#] also Early Words Together at Two	Early Years	Indicated	Learning at home	Group sessions involving families, practitioners and peer volunteers to improve the literacy	No

				development of children aged 2-5 years	
EmBRACE –Emotionally Resilient to Adverse Childhood Experiences[#]	Secondary	Universal implementation in schools to help indicated children	Collaborating with the community	A support package for schools which aims to help schools become aware of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and respond accordingly, working with parents where needed	No relevant evaluation
Family Links Nurturing Programme[#]	Early Years Primary Secondary	Universal Selective	Parenting	10 two-hour weekly group sessions on parenting, based on constructs of self-awareness, discipline, expectations, self-esteem and empathy	No*
Family Maths by HAFLS	Primary	Universal	Learning at home	A 10 hour group course aimed at helping children and parents learn to maths together in a fun way	No relevant evaluation
Family Thrive[#]	Early Years Primary	Universal	Parenting	6 group sessions for parents and carers to help them understand the Thrive approach (focused on neuroscience, attachment theory, child development and arts and creativity theories)	No relevant evaluation

Five to Thrive[#]	Early Years	Universal	Parenting	A framework with a selection of resources, training content and tools to help create a tailored local parenting programme based on five key activities: respond, cuddle, relax, play and talk	No relevant evaluation
Future First[#]	Primary Secondary	Universal	Collaborating with the community	Helps to create an alumni organisation for state schools; some parents might be alumni, and schools can connect parents into the programme	No relevant evaluation
Go4Schools[#]	Early Years Primary Secondary	Universal	Communicating	Online data system for the capture, analysis and sharing of classroom data, designed to enable staff, students and parents to make better decisions. Parents can access data on their children's attendance and grades 24/7	No relevant evaluation
Hampshire Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service[#]	Early Years Primary Secondary	Selective	Collaborating with the community	The service supports inclusive practice in schools, including translators and in-class support for parents	No relevant evaluation

LanguageNut[#]	Primary Secondary	Universal	Learning at home	Online foreign language learning resources for parents, students and teachers	No relevant evaluation
Leading Parent Partnership Award[#]	Early Years Primary Secondary	Universal	Other	A framework and evidence portfolio for school leaders to develop and demonstrate their parent involvement	No relevant evaluation
LENA Home[#]	Early Years	Selective	Parenting	Using a 'word pedometer' worn by the children, experts analyse the amount and level of language and teach parents how to communicate better with their children	No relevant evaluation
Lexia[#]	Primary Secondary	Universal	Learning at home	Online learning resources on reading for parents, students and teachers	Potentially
MarvellousMe[#]	Primary	Universal	Communicating	An app where teachers can tell parents what their children are learning and send reminders, deadlines and actions to the parents	No relevant evaluation
MyMaths[#]	Primary Secondary	Universal	Learning at home	Online learning resources on maths for parents, students and teachers	No relevant evaluation

NAHT Aspire Programme[#]	Early Years Primary Secondary	Selective	Other	A programme that aims to help schools move out of 'Requires improvement and into Good' within three years; as part of this, the programme may assist schools to improve parental engagement	No relevant evaluation
North Hull Sports Partnership[#]	Primary	Universal	Other	Partnerships of schools in Hull which organise sports, holiday clubs and PE classes together. May be used to undertake some childcare in school holidays	No relevant evaluation
Parent2Parent[#]	Primary Secondary	Universal	Learning at home	6-module group programme focusing on improving parents' understanding of learning and parental involvement in the school	No relevant evaluation
ParentPay[#]	Early Years Primary Secondary	Universal	Communicating	An online payment service for schools and parents	No relevant evaluation
PEEP Learning Together[#]	Early Years	Universal	Learning at home	24 1-hour sessions delivered over 2 terms based on parents and children working together to improve	No*

				early learning and development	
PiXL – Partners in Excellence[#]	Primary Secondary	Universal	Other	A partnership of schools, providing resources, strategies and training for staff and pupils to improve the schools; includes Parent and Carer Forums	No relevant evaluation
School Ping[#]	Early Years Primary Secondary	Universal	Communicating	Staff and parent communication resources for any purpose, both online and through text and with analytical and payment features	No relevant evaluation
Seesaw[#]	Early Years Primary Secondary	Universal	Communicating	Digital student portfolios of schoolwork, feedback and reports; includes home communication and translation tools	No relevant evaluation
Show My Homework[#]	Primary Secondary	Universal	Learning at home	Website which allows teachers to assign homework and give feedback, pupils to submit homework and parents to see their child's homework	No relevant evaluation
SMS Parent App[#]	Early Years Primary Secondary	Universal	Communicating	Text system that allows easy communication	No relevant evaluation

				between parents and schools	
Solihull parenting course[#]	Early Years Primary Secondary	Universal Indicated	Parenting	10-week parenting group based on the Solihull Approach model of containment, reciprocity and behaviour management	No*
Strengthening Families / Strengthening Communities[#]	Early Years Primary Secondary	Universal Selective	Parenting	Group sessions (also an online course) on parenting, specifically increasing parental confidence, improving family relationships, promoting children's social skills and self-discipline and protecting children against risk factors for poor outcomes	No relevant evaluation
Tapestry online learning journals[#]	Early Years Primary	Universal	Communicating	Online learning journals or reports for parents with photos, videos and information on the child	No relevant evaluation
Triple P Positive Parenting Programme[#]	Early Years Primary Secondary	Universal Selective Indicated	Parenting	Multiple programmes grouped into five levels which reflect the severity of need and complexity; programmes are based on social learning,	Yes* (for the online, enhanced, group Stepping Stones, selected Stepping Stones, standard Stepping Stones level 4 group teen, level 4

				cognitive behavioural and developmental theories and aim to prevent behavioural problems and develop 'positive relationships, attitudes and conduct'	standard, level 4 group and level 3 discussions groups versions, Family Transitions) No* (primary care Stepping Stones, selected seminar series, video-feedback interventions, group lifestyle and level 4 standard teen versions)

Websites (where available)
Achievement for All https://afaeducation.org/
Call Parents https://www.the-contactgroup.com/products/call-parents/
Chatterbooks https://readingagency.org.uk/children/quick-guides/chatterbooks/
Chuchill Music! http://www.churchillmusic.org.uk/
ClassDojo www.classdojo.com
Developing Experts https://www.developingexperts.com/
Early Words Together https://literacytrust.org.uk/programmes/early-words-together/
Family Links https://familylinks.org.uk/
Family Thrive https://www.thriveapproach.com/courses/advanced/
Five to Thrive https://fivetothrive.org.uk
Future First https://futurefirst.org.uk
Go4Schools https://www.go4schools.com/
Hampshire Ethnic Minority and Traveler Achievement Service http://www3.hants.gov.uk/emtas
LanguageNut https://www.languagenut.com/en-gb/
Leading Parent Partnership Award https://www.awardplace.co.uk/award/lppa

LENA Home https://www.nesta.org.uk/early-years-social-action-fund-grantees/lena-home
LEXIA www.lexiauk.co.uk
MarvellousMe https://marvellousme.com
MyMaths www.mymaths.co.uk
NAHT Aspire Programme http://nahtaspire.co.uk
North Hull Sports Partnership http://www.northhullsportsnetwork.co.uk/
Parent Pay www.parentpay.com
Parent2Parent https://www.hertsforlearning.co.uk/training-and-events/parent2parent
Partners in Excellence, PiXL https://www.pixl.org.uk
Peep Learning Together Programme https://peeple.org.uk/ltp
School Ping https://www.neweraed.co.uk/products/schoolping/
Seesaw https://web.seesaw.me
Show My Homework https://www.teamsatchel.com/product/smhw.html
SMS Parent App https://www.capita-sims.co.uk/products-and-services/sims-parent-app
Solihull parenting course https://solihullapproachparenting.com/
Strengthening Families / Strengthening Communities- https://raceequalityfoundation.org.uk/sfsc/
Tapestry https://tapestry.info/
Triple P https://www.triplep.net/glo-en/home/

Table 5.14: Do the activities you provide seek to do any of the following? Please tick all that apply. Then, in the boxes to the right, please rank your top 5 activities.

N = 153	Number endorsing	Percent	Most common rank /5
Train/support parents to help support their child's learning generally	94	61.4	1
Train/support teachers to engage with parents (including training focused on behaviour management and/or learning)	56	36.6	1
Give parents information about their child's progress and how to address deficiencies and/or continue what doing well	137	89.5	2
Train/support parents to help improve their child's specific learning (e.g. reading, writing, maths)	109	71.2	2
Give parents information about what other parents do to support their children's learning	24	15.7	2
Give parents information about what their child is learning	136	88.9	3
Train/support parents to help improve their child's behaviour / social-emotional skills	100	65.4	3
Give parents encouragement, reminders and/or tips about how to support their child's learning (especially when not at school i.e. at home / during holidays)	94	61.4	3
Train/support parents to engage meaningfully with teachers and the school	51	33.3	3
Encourage children to have conversations with their parents about what they are learning at school	104	68.0	4
Help parents of children in the same class/school to get to know and/or support one another	39	25.5	5
Develop formal home-school agreement/plan	77	50.3	5

Finally, respondents were asked about how their schools engaged with parents, in other words what methods they used to interact. As expected, almost all schools were reported to hold individual and/or group meetings with parents at school, and the majority were reported to use phone calls, texts and social media to interact with parents (Table 5.15). Online learning applications that focus on teaching particular subjects or skills, such as maths, spelling or comprehension tools, are being used by well over half of schools (60%, 95%CI: 52-68%), and respondents also reported using other online home-school learning/progress journals and communication tools, such as Class Dojo and Tapestry. Home visits are used by fewer schools (42%, 95%CI: 34-50%).

Table 5.15: What methods do you primarily use to engage and interact with parents?

N = 153	Number endorsing	Percent	95% CI
Individual meetings with parents at school (with or without children)	149	97.4	94.9-99.9
Group meetings for parents (with or without children)	135	88.2	83.1-93.3
Phone calls	126	82.4	76.4-88.4
Text messages (normal or automated)	123	80.4	74.1-86.7
Social media (e.g. Twitter, Facebook) and school websites	123	80.4	74.1-86.7
Presentations	112	73.2	66.2-80.2
Online programmes or applications (e.g. MyMaths, EducationCity, DoodleMaths, Nessy)	92	60.1	52.4-67.8
Individual meetings with parents at home (with or without children)	64	41.8	34-49.6
Other Examples given: Tapestry, Marvellous Me, Seesaw, Class Dojo	13	7.7	3.5-11.9

Key messages

There was a fair response to the online survey for schools, although the final sample is biased in favour of well-performing primary schools. The survey did not meet its quota for the number of early years or secondary schools and the estimates around what these schools are currently doing are, therefore, less precise. As such, stratified analyses (by education phase – early years, primary, secondary) have not been provided for the Epstein framework activities. There may be significant differences in the types of activities or the priorities of schools dependent on their phase of education, but the margins of error are too wide to provide any confidence in conclusions at that level.

The survey does suggest that schools in England are using a wide range of activities to support parents' engagement in their children's school-based learning; many activities are passive or dissemination only (e.g. providing parents with information or materials) but active forms of support are also being provided (e.g. parent training programmes and early literacy intervention). For the most part, schools rely on traditional methods for interacting with parents, such as annual parents' evening meetings and newsletters, but many schools are using innovations in online technology both to communicate with families and also to provide access to learning opportunities and materials for children and parents.

The survey identified some tensions around school and community partnerships. While over two-fifths (42%) of schools were reported to be engaging in community partnerships, fewer respondents (26%) endorsed community collaborations as activities their schools undertake to support parents' engagement in children's learning. Indeed, data from the survey suggest that most schools provide families with a lot of information about activities and events taking place in the community, but few schools actively integrate with community organisations to recruit to or provide these activities or services.

While respondents from the majority of schools surveyed identify parent engagement as a priority area and one that is the responsibility of all staff, very few schools were reported to have written policies or procedures to guide staff. Where schools have nominated individuals with a lead role for parent engagement, this tends to be one of two types: someone from the school leadership team or someone identified as a school-family link or support worker. A third of schools were reported to have policies for specifically engaging disadvantaged families and, on average, schools reportedly prioritise one-to-one work with children who are struggling academically or behaviourally over activities to engage all families in the school community.

Findings from the interviews

Sixteen telephone interviews were completed in total by JL (n=5) and JM (n=11). Of these, three were with respondents working in the nursery phase of education, six covered the primary phase, five were for the secondary phase and two were all through. Table 5.16 shows the sample by each key category. Interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes on average. Thirteen interviews were carried out with the school head teacher and three were conducted with a senior member of staff whose role included leading on parental engagement.

Table 5.16: Interview sample by quota categories

Phase	Region	Location	School category	Ofsted rating	Deprivation
Nursery (n=3)	North West, Tower Hamlets, West Midlands	Urban (3)	LA maintained (3)	Outstanding (2) Good (1)	≥ 14% FSM (1)
Primary (n=6)	East Midlands (2) East of England Humber, North West, Yorkshire, South East	Urban (4) Rural (2)	Academy/free (2) LA maintained (3) Special (1)	Outstanding (1) Good (4) Requires improvement (1)	≥ 14% FSM (4)
Secondary (n=5)	East Midlands, North West South West (2), West Midlands	Urban (2) Rural (3)	Academy/free (4) LA maintained (1)	Outstanding (1) Good (3) Requires improvement (1)	≥ 14% FSM (4)
All through (n=2)	North West, South East	Urban (1) Rural (1)	Academy/free (1) LA maintained (1)	Requires improvement (2)	≥ 14% FSM (1)

In all interviews it was clear that respondents thought that the foundation for parental engagement was the building of trusting and supportive relationships and that, although information giving was necessary, it was not sufficient for achieving the aim of getting parents to be more involved in their child's learning, particularly for parents from economically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds. One head summed up their parental engagement policy as follows:

"We want our parents to be comfortable in school, to get over any bad experiences they had, know how to help and support their child or how to get the help and advice if they need it. The whole point for us of parental engagement is; what is the impact and how do we measure that impact."

"Parental engagement is not rocket science is it, it's just about being proactive and providing what parents want, it's about listening to parents isn't it and then doing it" (Outstanding nursery in Tower Hamlets)

Asking parents what they want via face-to-face consultation and questionnaires and then acting on it was mentioned in all interviews and seen as the starting point for building trusting relationships with parents.

The remainder of the results from the telephone interviews are presented under headings representing each focused question respectively.

What are schools in England typically doing to engage parents in children's learning?
Survey results show that schools use a variety of strategies designed to promote the six types of parent engagement in children's learning identified by Epstein (parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, collaborating with the community). However, the interviews highlight overarching strategies used across all of these categories to build and strengthen relationships with parents. Below we outline the variety of strategies that schools are currently using to build relationships. These have been grouped under key engagement methods.

Face-to-face contact
School staff understand that face-to-face contact is essential in building relationships with parents and, therefore, use a number of strategies to get parents (and grandparents) *'through the school doors'* (there was arguably less attention to learning at home and doing things outside of school). Schools believe that a 'toolbox' of strategies, bespoke to both the school and the individual child/family, is necessary and that, in the first instance, parents must feel comfortable to come into the school, thus having an '*inviting and welcoming reception area with a warm and friendly receptionist*' was considered crucial.

Most respondents highlighted that the success of specific 'engagement in learning activities' in motivating parents to enact the desired behaviour(s) depends upon how these activities are promoted and the manner in which they are delivered. Informal sessions delivered in a non-threatening and non-judgmental way are seen to be the most effective in increasing parental attendance and engagement, while being *'human', 'finding common ground with each parent, understanding the perspective of the parent'* and ensuring that teachers are aware of the child and the family situation are regarded as being key to establishing relationships.

School staff appreciate that training teachers in how to make interactions with parents positive is important, particularly for schools with a high number of socially and economically disadvantaged children and those with a high proportion of children with EAL. A few schools were reported to have sent staff on training to support them in their

interactions with parents, but no school had a specific training programme to support NQTs [newly qualified teachers] in engaging and building relationships with parents.

Face-to-face sessions to focus on a specific topic/aspect of learning and/or development include:

- 'Learning cafes', used as a means of informing parents what their child is learning in a particular subject, encouraging them to learn together, supporting revision (e.g. 'Bring your grown-up to maths', 'Read with your child', 'healthy revision habits')
- Parenting courses/workshops, bespoke to the needs of the parents/families in each school (e.g. 'Living with boys/girls', 'Parenting your teen' (secondary), 'Bedtime routines', 'Hobby craft' (primary special school), 'nurturing and attachment', 'Story Sack' (nursery))
- Personalised one-to-one parent meetings/sessions, used as a means to support the specific needs of individual children with regards to an aspect of their learning and/or development.

In order to improve attendance at these types of activities, schools run sessions in the evenings and at the weekends and offer taxi vouchers and/or a crèche.

Some secondary school staff use incentives to encourage parental attendance at Years 10 and 11 parent-teacher consultations, for example only giving out mock GCSE results and school prom tickets at this time.

Offering opportunities for informal face-to-face interactions between teacher and parent as well as parent to parent, which do not necessarily focus on a specific aspect of learning, is also seen to be important as this helps build and develop engagement for the activities mentioned above, as well as providing an opportunity to advertise them. These include:

- Open drop-in sessions (primary and nursery) to see teaching in action
- Social and fund-raising events to celebrate the school community and enable parents to build relationships with each other (e.g. 'Knit and Natter', coffee mornings)
- Classroom collect and/or drop-off at the beginning/end of the school day (nursery/primary)
- Parent invites to whole school assemblies (primary)
- Home and school visits at transition points
- Feeder school visits across the term, in which schools send their teachers into the feeder primary schools to co-run events (e.g. a play).

Building positive perceptions of the school and the role of education

Poor Ofsted results and/or previous negative situations such as complaints about a newly introduced school policy can have a long-lasting negative impact on parental perceptions of the school. To mitigate this, schools use a range of strategies to show parents what the school offers and to instill child and parent aspiration.

All respondents said that they believe that involving parents in any policy change by garnering their views and explaining the reasoning behind them is important in creating the conditions for successful home-school partnerships, although the extent to which parents

are actually involved in decision-making as opposed to just being informed about decisions is unclear. One recently appointed head teacher in a primary school which required improvement said parents had felt badly let down over an eight-year period due to lack parental input into and dissemination of the school's curriculum strategy; as a result, the senior management team have spent three years building up trust by listening to the concerns of parents and, as much as is feasibly possible, involving them in the decision-making process.

Interview respondents thought that school staff needed to take time to explain that education was a two-way process and that they will support parents to create the context that allows their child to thrive emotionally, socially and academically. The Parent2Parent programme (see Table 5.13) used by one respondent was deemed to work well as it unpicks with parents what it means to be a good learner and how they can support their child to be successful in school (including having a positive attitude and a growth mindset). The focus of the programme is about what parents can do to instill a positive learning attitude for their child rather than having to teach knowledge and understanding.

Some schools offer new parents a 'school walk around' to familiarise them with each area of the building and its uses so that they can relate more to their child's learning journey.

A negative attitude to learning and a lack of parent aspiration were cited as key barriers to parental involvement in learning. School staff thought that building child and parent aspiration was crucial in improving parental engagement, particularly for the most socially and economically deprived children. They reportedly do this in a number of ways, for example: using relevant role models (e.g. one school brought in a local multi-cultural poet from a deprived background to teach poetry and to highlight a number of social issues facing the children in her school); providing trips to industry, the arts and universities; and bringing in higher/further education representatives and apprenticeship providers to talk to children and parents about life after school.

Linking with the community

School staff believe that linking with the community serves to strengthen relationships with parents and families and thus work with a number of local organisations and groups. These include:

- Enterprise Partners – to promote local employment
- Children's centres (nursery) – to support transition
- Charities – to fund raise and support the community
- Residents' associations (low SES schools) – to support parents with housing issues
- Banks (low SES schools) to provide money management courses
- Gardening groups – community volunteers – to teach children gardening skills
- Health and social care – to support the health and social needs of vulnerable families.

One secondary school from a deprived area is part of a community pledge to '*build their city into a kinder more tolerant community'* in response to a terrorist attack. This school supports pensioners in the community by providing lessons in accessing the internet and hosting a Christmas lunch with pupil performances.

Although schools generally have strong links with individual community groups, no school was reported to take an overarching school-community partnership approach to parent/community engagement and development.

Dedicated personnel to link with parents
Many schools use key personnel to engage with parents. These individuals are part of the local community and understand the issues faced by parents. Most of these roles are non-teaching, allowing time to respond to parental concerns immediately and to follow up on a course of action. Schools agree that not being a teacher allows time for the 'key worker' to build a relationship and also provides a neutral and non-threatening point of contact for parents.

One respondent reported that their school has a 'pastoral manager' who remains with the same cohort of children as they progress through school; this works well in building and sustaining relationships with children and their families.

Building a culture of celebration
Respondents reported feeling that it is important to celebrate success. This involves calling/speaking to parents when things are going well, not just when there is a problem, and celebrating evidence of home learning beyond the completion of specific homework tasks.

Do schools undertake particular activities aimed at parents of children from disadvantaged backgrounds?
Schools with low SES parents clearly have to work hard to support parents' engagement with the school in general, as well as with specific learning activities. These parents are often termed 'hard to reach', although a couple of respondents commented that they need to be mindful that these parents found the school 'hard to reach' and it was important to understand why. Most schools in the interview sample were reported to employ a dedicated full-time non-teaching 'key worker'. A variety of terms were used to name this role (e.g. 'family liaison worker', 'pupil premium coordinator', 'school parent', 'school counsellor', 'school outreach worker' and 'parent ambassador'). This 'key worker' provides one-to-one bespoke support for these families, which involves direct contact (face to face or phone conversations) as *'many do not have access to email and do not routinely use the school's online communication channels'*. Strategies for building relationships with parents and supporting learning for these children include:

- Developing action plans with the family and providing parenting and family learning programmes that support emotional well-being as well the development of skills to support their child's learning
- Meeting parents off site in a neutral, non-threatening environment and finding out what support they would like
- Visiting the family home
- Calling parents prior to a parents' evening to promote and encourage them to attend and ensuring that they are greeted by a familiar and friendly face (usually the 'key worker') when they arrive.

One school in the sample ensures that all Pupil Premium students (including other vulnerable children) have an Individual Success Plan Coach (ISPC) when they move into Year 11. The ISPC becomes their 'significant other adult' in school and links to the child's home. The choice of coach is based on who is best to build a relationship with the child rather than who has the best skill set.

One head teacher in the sample employs teachers and learning support assistants who are from more disadvantaged backgrounds themselves so that they *'understand and can empathise with the particular families in their school and the issues they are dealing with'.*

It was reported in interviews that schools often use their Pupil Premium money to carry out intensive work with these children during curriculum time and the summer holidays (e.g. an intensive seven-day education programme involving trips out). Financial support for parents is also provided via this fund (communicated directly to parents, via the 'key worker') for clubs, extra-curricular activities, desks at home, revision guides, school trips and taxi vouchers for school events such as parents' evenings.

What are the barriers for schools in building relationships with parents and engaging them in learning?

Interview respondents reported that a number of factors hinder or impact negatively on the building of relationships between schools and parents. These can broadly be categorised into system, school and family level factors.

System level factors

The high workloads of teachers and associated stress and burnout mean that it is not feasible for many teachers to devote the time and energy necessary to support the most vulnerable families. One respondent reported that the lack of an effective communication system between education and social services makes it difficult for staff to support these families in a timely and effective manner, which negatively affects relationships.

It was pointed out by one head teacher that the long-term shortage of maths and science teachers impacts adversely on the ability of schools to engage parents in learning in these subject areas as resource is so limited.

One teacher thought that a single institution for 0-19 year olds would be invaluable in helping to build trusting and supportive relationships as there would be continuity of staff and easy access to information on children/families: '*Transition often creates anxiety for children and parents and schools need to start from scratch to build relationships.'*

One respondent felt that there should be a greater push in the media to highlight the responsibility of parents in developing happy and thriving children. It was thought that policy tended to put unrealistic expectations on schools with media headlines often saying *'schools should do more to...'* rather than *'parents can do more by…'*. This context leads to parents having unrealistic expectations of schools and makes it more difficult for them to convey to parents that a child's education and well-being is not the sole responsibility of the school, rather it is a two-way process between the school and the parent.

School level factors
There are a number of school level factors which impact negatively on the building of relationships with parents. A poor Ofsted rating means that parents lose respect for and trust in the school, which takes a long time to rebuild. Poor Osfted ratings are generally lower in schools with a high proportion of Pupil Premium children. A head teacher who had worked in high Pupil Premium schools all her life commented that *'The weakest end up in the weakest schools, perpetuating a lack of engagement and failure'.*

Many schools mentioned that it works well having dedicated personnel who can spend time building relationships with parents'; however, a lack of funds often means that head teachers are unable to renew contracts or create such roles.

School staff were reported to feel that it is difficult to engage the so-called 'hard-to-reach' families and that it should not be expected that teachers and/or 'key workers' have the necessary skills and competencies to communicate with parents and families appropriately. One respondent thought that there is a general lack of training for teachers in this area and that it should be a core element of teacher training.

One head teacher thought that some teachers and governors do not understand the issues that socially and economically deprived families face: '*They make assumptions about such families and this can create internal barriers to the introduction of new policies and strategies to support them'*.

Being open and adaptable to change as a school was viewed by interview respondents as important in building relationships with parents; however, when changing policy and/or introducing new strategies, telling parents what to do and being too dictatorial was seen by all respondents as having a negative impact on relationships. Participants said that they think it is important to provide parents with the reasoning behind any policy/strategy change and to seek their views to ensure 'buy-in'. However, there was little evidence that schools had adapted and/or changed policy as a result of parental feedback.

Schools with a large range of families across the socio-economic spectrum reportedly find it difficult to build relationships with the more socially and economically disadvantaged families in the school as they are *'embarrassed by their poverty'*. Meanwhile, in schools with a large intake of families with EAL the language differences impact on the quality of communication and cultural differences affect understanding.

When it comes to delivering specific programmes or workshops, respondents from two schools thought that externally facilitated courses which are *'not relevant to the school or the community'* do not engage parents in learning and can often have the opposite effect.

Family level factors
Parents' own failure in the education system, leading to a lack or aspiration, knowledge, skills and confidence, self-esteem and a perception that ability is fixed, was mentioned as a barrier to parent engagement in all the interviews and came across strongly in the survey responses: *'We do not acknowledge currently in our system that a significant proportion of a child's learning is stimulated and created at home. If a parent has failed in education they do*

not have the tools, learning strategies, academic know how and experience to support their child. They often end up in the most challenging schools (they have not fought hard to get into the 'outstanding' schools).'

Respondents from the more deprived schools reported that busy parents working long and unsociable hours, working class parents working shifts and/or holding down multiple jobs and social care issues such as addiction, domestic abuse and poor mental health all make it very difficult to engage parents in their child's learning.

What support, input or resources do schools need to support efforts to build relationships and engage parents in their child's learning?
Respondents generally felt that schools are working with limited resources and a lack of money, meaning that they struggle to fund the dedicated 'key worker', a post that is seen as essential in engaging parents. This is particularly the case for schools with a high proportion of children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. They also said that they would like funding for teachers to run additional sessions on learning in the evenings as well as additional support staff to help input school and child level information into data systems, which is very time consuming and takes staff away from other tasks.

School staff would also like more funding for educational resources, such as books, tablets, manuals and online presentations for both teachers and parents (e.g. for phonics, literacy, maths, key skills, building aspirations), parenting courses, trips for children to visit universities, industry, exhibitions and the theatre and for experts to speak on subjects such as internet safety. One head teacher mentioned that it would be helpful if schools were able to apply for pots of money to try different ideas and approaches to engage parents in learning.

One head teacher whose school has many children who fall just below the threshold for obtaining Pupil Premium funds (meaning that they do not qualify for such funding) mentioned that a graded rather than an 'all or nothing' criterion for receiving money for the more disadvantaged children would help schools such as his to be adequately resourced to engage with and meet the needs of such families.

One school was reported to be using the 'Leading Parent Partnership Award' (see Table 5.13) and the respondent concerned thought this should be freely available to all schools.

Many respondents mentioned that a best practice guidance report/audit tool for schools to set up/monitor sustainable effective liaison (including a list of programmes and case studies of success stories in other schools) would be very helpful in knowing what might work for their school.

Do schools evaluate their activity to engage parents in children's learning, and if so how? Is there any evidence linking schools' parent engagement strategy to outcomes (especially attainment)?
Respondents had very little to say about evaluating their parent engagement activity other than they use registers, Ofsted questionnaires and bespoke surveys to assess parental attendance, views and attitudes after a new programme or strategy is introduced.

Online platforms such as 'Show my homework' were mentioned by one respondent as a means of assessing the engagement of parents with homework, although his response was vague and he seemed unaware of how data were collected or what the results show. Child-level outcomes in relation to learning, attendance and behaviour are collected using individual and/or group 'child tracker' records but schools tend to look at the progress of individual children rather than using the 'tracker' to formally monitor the impact of programmes and/or policies on a cohort of children.

Conclusions

It is widely recognised among head teachers and other school leaders in England that it is important for early years settings and schools to support parents' engagement in their children's learning. Accordingly, there is much relevant activity in the sector, and an acknowledgement of the foundational importance of building good relationships with parents. However, there is scope for improvement. Currently activity leans towards more passive or dissemination-only approaches and traditional methods of engagement. There is also an emphasis on work with families of children who are struggling, as opposed to a more holistic effort to engage all families, while partnership with other community organisations is limited. There is also relatively little evaluation of parent support activities. At the same time, there are clearly several barriers to early years settings and schools supporting parents more effectively, whether at the system, school or family levels, and an identified need for more resources and support with such endeavours, including staff time, materials and training. The next chapter draws on the evidence described in Chapters 3 and 4 to set out implications for improving policy and practice in this context.

Summary of key points

Survey

Schools in England use a wide range of activities to support parents' engagement in their children's learning. Many are passive (e.g. providing parents with information or materials) but some are active (e.g. parent training programmes, early literacy intervention).

Schools generally rely on traditional methods for interacting with parents, such as parent evenings and newsletters, but some use online technology both to communicate with families and also to provide access to learning opportunities and materials for children and parents.

Most schools provide families with a lot of information about community activities but few actively integrate with community organisations to recruit to or provide these activities.

The majority of schools identify parent engagement as a priority area and one that is the responsibility of all staff, although very few have written policies or procedures to guide staff.

On average, schools reported prioritising one-to-one work with parents of children who are struggling behaviourally or academically over activities to engage all families in the school community.

Interviews

Respondents felt that the foundation for parental engagement is school staff building trusting and supportive relationships with parents. A variety of strategies are used to do this:

- face-to-face contact (e.g. learning cafes, parenting courses, one-to-one meetings), including evenings and weekends and also through informal interactions (e.g. pick up, drop off, fundraisers, parent invites to school assemblies);
- building positive perceptions of the school and the role of education (e.g. consulting parents on policy changes, helping parents to see what they can do to support child's learning, building parent aspirations and expectations);
- linking with the community (e.g. work with local organisations and groups – charities, employers, health and social care)
- dedicated personnel to link with parents (most are non-teaching)
- building a culture of celebration (e.g. calling parents when things are going well)

Particular activities are used with parents of children from disadvantaged backgrounds:

- most employ a dedicated full-time non-teaching 'key worker' to provide bespoke one-to-one support, which commonly involves: building action plans, meeting parents off site, home visits and encouraging attendance at parent evenings.
- schools often use Pupil Premium money to undertake intensive work with these children during curriculum time and the summer holidays, and provide financial support for extracurricular activities, a desk at home, revision guides and so on.

Respondents identified barriers at three levels for schools in building relationships with parents and engaging them in their children's learning:

- *System level*: it can be hard for teachers to devote the necessary time and energy to engaging parents owing to their workload; this is exacerbated by a shortage of teachers in maths and science; also, transition points can mean a loss of continuity in relationships
- *School level*: poor Ofsted ratings mean that parents can lose respect for and trust in a school; there is often a lack of funds for dedicated parent engagement personnel; there is a lack of training for teachers in how to engage parents (especially those who might be regarded as 'hard to reach'); there can be a lack of understanding in school leadership/governance about the issues faced by low-income families; and EAL can impede school communication with families
- *Family level*: parents' own failure in the education system can contribute to a lack of aspiration for and skills to help their own children; parents are often busy, working long and unsociable hours; some parents have particular social or health problems, such as addiction, domestic violence or poor mental health, all of which can make engagement harder

Respondents also identified the inputs and resources that they consider schools need in order to build relationships and support parents:

- Funding for a dedicated key worker, especially in schools with a high proportion of low-income families, also additional sessions on learning in evenings;
- Funding for administrative work that takes teachers away from other tasks;
- Funding for educational resources for teachers and parents (e.g. books) and opportunities for parents and children (e.g. parenting courses, trips to universities); and
- A best practice guidance report / audit tool on parent engagement

Respondents reported that besides registers, Ofsted questionnaires and bespoke surveys to assess attendance and parental views on new initiatives, schools do very little by way of evaluation of their activity to engage parents.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and implications for policy and practice

Introduction

The study described in this report had two aims. The first was to synthesise the best current international evidence on parental engagement in children's learning from the early years through to secondary school, focusing on:

(a) effective parenting practices (including styles and activities) associated with academic attainment and other learning outcomes at different stages of children's development
(b) what activities delivered in or by schools and early years settings can promote and support these practices, particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The second aim was to identify what schools in England are currently doing to support parental engagement, and in doing so to determine the extent to which practice matches the current evidence. This concluding chapter pulls together the main messages as they relate to these aims from the evidence review, survey and interviews, highlighting areas of promise but also where caution is needed. Drawing additionally on the wider literature, interviews with subject experts and discussions within the expert advisory panel convened by the EEF, it also sketches out the features of a more holistic approach to how schools and early years settings can support parents' engagement in their children's learning. The chapter concludes with recommendations for further research. Since relatively few studies included in the systematic reviews cited in this report or included here as primary studies were conducted in the UK, more studies in the UK are clearly needed and the results that are summarised in what follows should be read bearing in mind that there may be issues of cultural and contextual transferability.

Parent engagement in children's learning

Parental engagement in children's learning is associated with improved academic outcomes at all ages (e.g. Wilder 2014; Castro et al. 2015). The association is strongest when parent engagement is defined as parents' expectations for their children's academic achievement. When referring to parents in this context it is important to include fathers, since the evidence indicates that both the quantity and quality of direct father involvement have a positive impact on children's early learning (McWayne et al. 2013).

Several activities have been linked to improved academic outcomes at each key stage, controlling for background factors such as parental income or education (Kiernan and Mensah 2011; Sammons et al. 2015b). In the early years, the evidence supports a parent reading to and with their child, listening to the child read, helping them learn letters, numbers, songs or nursery rhymes, modelling literacy and providing good quality parent-child interaction. Collectively this adds up to creating a supportive home learning environment.

As children get older, effective parent engagement includes parents encouraging and taking an interest in their child's learning and providing enrichment activities. For children in primary school this might entail educational visits by families (e.g. to the library) and other enrichment outings (e.g. visits to farms or museums), and using computers or mobile

technologies for learning opportunities. For secondary school children it can take the form of academic enrichment activities, parents showing interest in school life (e.g. talking about school work and subjects for GCSEs) and parents knowing about and monitoring coursework and homework. This appears to be more important than direct involvement, such as helping with homework (Castro et al. 2015; Higgins and Katsipataki 2015; See and Gorard 2015a/b).

The effectiveness of interventions to support parents

While it is clear, therefore, that parent engagement is associated with children's learning outcomes, the evidence on the best approaches schools and early years settings can take to *influence* what parents do in a way that improves children's learning is more limited (See and Gorard 2013, 2015b). There are surprisingly few high-quality evaluations demonstrating the impacts of parental engagement interventions on children's attainment, and the more rigorous studies show mixed results. There is evidence that these approaches can improve parental *involvement* in school (e.g. parents' attitudes towards school, willingness to take part in school activities) (Goodall and Vorhaus 2011), and some evidence of programmes improving children's social, emotional and behavioural outcomes, which can be a worthwhile target for schools' efforts in their own right, and may in turn lead to improved learning outcomes (Durlak et al. 2011). The direct evidence of an impact on children's academic attainment is comparatively weak, whether it is derived from the systematic reviews or the more recent primary studies analysed for this study. Indeed, classroom interventions working directly with children currently have more evidence of effectiveness at improving learning than parenting interventions with the same aim (See and Gorard 2015b; Higgins et al. 2017).

Areas of promise

That said, there are some promising areas for intervention as regards early years settings and schools supporting parents' engagement with the children's learning. The first concerns supporting parents to help their children read via home and family literacy interventions. For young children, promoting shared reading should be a central component of any parental engagement approach. Before children are able to read, studies highlight the benefits of reading to children (Higgins et al. 2017); as soon as children begin to read, parents should be encouraged to read *with* children, supporting their children in a variety of ways, for example by asking questions or by linking the topic of the book to real-life examples (Lam et al. 2013). As children get older, it becomes important for parents to *listen* to their children read. Giving parents written information containing simple, specific techniques for helping their children's reading might yield greater benefits than more general information (Goodall 2018). Ensuring there is two-way communication between parents and teachers is important to ensure that schools are providing information in areas that parents will find helpful.

Most schools already encourage parents to read to or with their children in some way, but additional tips, support and resources can make home reading more effective. Supporting parents to read in a more interactive way and prompting longer and more frequent conversations with their children are particularly important (Bierman et al. 2015; See and Gorard 2015a; Grindal et al. 2016); the parent-child interactions that take place during shared reading are thought to be the key ingredient to their success (Whitehurst et al. 1988). For example, the strategy of 'Pause, Prompt, Praise' may help parents when listening

to children read: pausing to let them work out words if they get stuck, providing a prompt or 'clue' to help (but not giving the answer), and praising them when they concentrate and problem-solve (McNaughton and Glynn 1981; Tracey et al. 2016).

Not all interventions designed to introduce home reading strategies to parents and support regular use are equally effective, so they need to be selected, supported and monitored carefully (Sénéchal and Young 2008). For example, book-gifting is unlikely to be effective on its own (Goldfeld et al. 2011, 2012), whereas providing more structured support, ideas and activities with carefully chosen books *can* be effective (Maxwell et al. 2014; Burgoyne et al. 2018). Such approaches do not necessarily require parents (or children) to attend intensive courses. If these programmes focus on children with particular needs (e.g. struggling readers), they need to be carefully targeted and supported (Tracey et al. 2015).

A second promising avenue involves classroom- and home-based summer reading interventions. The decline in children's reading development that can occur during summer holiday times when children are not in the classroom, particularly for low-income children, is well documented (Allington and McGill-Franzen 2017). Interventions designed to prevent or address this are not used widely in the UK, but they show some promise in international studies (Kim and Quinn 2013; Kim et al. 2016, 2017). Parents and children are likely to benefit from some input on knowledge and skills from teachers ('scaffolding') prior to or during home-based summer learning programmes, in order to match the right books to a child's reading level and to encourage parental involvement in home literacy (Maxwell et al. 2014; Kim and Quinn 2017; Stein 2017). The approach may be particularly beneficial for lower income children who are most at risk of falling behind in the summer. Such approaches may need to run over several summers to improve the vocabulary of low-income children, and the combination of teacher-directed comprehension lessons and careful text-levelling strategies appears to be important to support the home reading (Kim and Quinn 2017). Texting parents over the summer may be beneficial in supporting such activity (Kraft and Monti-Nussbaum 2017). Since only a third of respondents in the survey conducted for this report reported that their schools offered this kind of intervention, there is considerable scope for progress here, although clearly it needs to be adequately resourced.

A third promising area involves improving school-home communication. Specifically, for all age groups, well-designed school communications can be effective for improving attainment and a range of other outcomes, such as attendance (e.g. York et al. 2014; Kraft and Rogers 2015; Miller et al. 2016; Bergman and Chan 2017; Doss et al. 2017). The impacts from such approaches may be smaller than those from more intensive programmes, and will not be sufficient on their own to support children with greater needs. But the initial evidence is promising, and some groups may benefit particularly; for example, one study found that text messaging had particularly positive effects on engaging fathers (Hurwitz et al. 2015). School communications are also important for raising interest and engagement in more structured activities (see below). Evidence from the survey suggests that schools in England generally rely on traditional methods (parent evenings, newsletters) to communicate with parents, and although some use texting it is unlikely that the messages are tailored, so there is considerable scope to improve practice in this respect. Although texting interventions are generally low cost and straightforward to introduce, and therefore also to scale (York et al.

2014), attention is needed to both their content and implementation, and some of these lessons potentially apply to other forms of communication.

Regarding *content*, for instance, school communications are likely to be more effective if they are personalised, linked to learning and focused on promoting positive interactions (e.g. celebrating success) (Doss et al. 2017). The report cites several evaluations of programmes that use text-messaging to prompt conversations about learning at home, provide tips to parents or offer parents information on children's learning. One study suggested that messages usefully comprise a mix of: facts highlighting the importance of particular skills; tips for short and simple activities for parents to do with their children that build on existing routines, or conversations prompts; and support texts to provide encouragement and reinforcement (York et al. 2014). Although the costs of personalised communications will be higher, they will be less than the costs of running a course with very low attendance, or without the parents whom schools most want to reach. Messages also need to be adjusted for the stage of schooling. For older children, for instance, providing information to parents on upcoming tests, homework completion and grades can be beneficial (Miller et al. 2016; Bergman and Chan 2017).

As for the *implementation* of texting (and potentially other) communications, careful thought needs to be given to the frequency, timing and targeting of messages. Weekly messages over 6-8 months appear to be effective, though more frequent and shorter approaches have also had positive results. Schools' approach to communications may be particularly important for engaging parents who could play an important role but often have less contact with school, such as fathers (McWayne et al. 2013). There is also some evidence that it is beneficial to involve other family members besides the primary contact, who might be otherwise engaged (Kraft et al. 2017). Parents are generally accepting of texting programmes, including the content, frequency and timing of messages, and are more likely to participate if the intervention operates an opt-out rather than opt-in approach (Kraft et al. 2017). It may help first to provide samples and gather feedback on what parents find helpful and to monitor perceptions to avoid overloading or irritating parents with messages (Hurwitz et al. 2015; Miller et al. 2016). It also makes sense to develop interventions like this in such a way that they fit the existing school system and personnel (Kraft et al. 2017).

Fourth, there is promising evidence for some structured and targeted interventions for parents aimed at improving children's social, emotional and behavioural outcomes, which could support learning. Strategies that help parents and schools to take a consistent approach to addressing a child's difficult behaviour are likely to be beneficial, not just for mental health or behaviour but also for academic performance (Sumi et al. 2013; Brotman et al. 2013, 2016; Dawson-McLure et al. 2015). One promising approach, for example, involves parents and teachers setting goals for the child, agreeing and implementing specific strategies that can be changed to help the child's behaviour, responding consistently to the child's behaviour and gathering information to assess the child's progress (Sheridan et al. 2017a/b). Although not a focus of this study, some group-based courses designed to help parents to manage children's conduct problems are also effective; Incredible Years, for example, has been shown in multiple trials internationally to improve children's behaviour (Menting et al. 2013; Gardner et al. 2016).

By contrast, there is mixed evidence for the benefits of some targeted interventions for parents of children who are experiencing difficulties with their learning. One 10-week programme, SPOKES, which teaches parents of struggling readers strategies to support their children's reading, had no overall effect on standardised reading or social-emotional outcomes, but there was a positive impact on some aspects of reading for boys in the longer-term, equivalent to between three and seven months of additional progress (Tracey et al. 2016). Similarly, after-school programmes with adjunctive elements for parents can have a positive effect on some but not all academic and related learning outcomes (Biggart et al. 2013; Goux et al. 2017), although since their effect on parent engagement is mixed or non-existent, the mechanism of change is unclear.

Areas requiring caution

As well as areas of promise, this study suggests that there are forms of intervention that should only be tried with caution or require considerable care.

First, giving parents general information on child development or curriculum content can provide helpful context, but is not sufficient unless it is linked to specific actions that parents can take to support children's learning (Kaminski et al. 2008; Grindal et al. 2016).

Second, home-visiting by trained staff can be effective for engaging parents and improving children's language development and other learning outcomes in the early years (e.g. Bierman et al. 2015) but it depends on their content and intensity. Specifically, programmes that provide one or more home visits per month, and that include active learning for parents (in the shape of modelling or practising particular parenting skills), have been associated with larger positive impacts (Grindal et al. 2016). Home visiting could be particularly beneficial for parents least likely to attend meetings at school, or those from more disadvantaged backgrounds (Nutbrown et al. 2005).

Third, schools should be cautious about if and how they encourage parents to engage directly with homework. A review of meta-analyses concluded that, overall, there was no positive relationship between parents providing homework assistance and students' academic achievement (Wilder 2014). In some meta-analyses the association was negative, which is thought to be for two reasons: parents are rarely trained to teach certain concepts and may be unfamiliar with appropriate teaching methods; and students who struggle academically may be more likely to request parental assistance with homework. It is true that children who do homework have better school outcomes than children who do not, especially at secondary school, and parents can have a positive effect on homework completion and help children develop effective learning habits (Higgins et al. 2018). However, it is not clear if it is homework that contributes to the better school outcomes (ibid.), while homework interventions designed to engage parents in homework have generally not been linked to increased attainment (Patall et al. 2008).

Fourth, while offering regular group sessions for parents to support children's learning has the potential to be beneficial, trials of these programmes in the UK show that ensuring parents attend can be very difficult. Providing a series of workshops for parents can be hard work, costly and time-consuming, and the parents who could benefit most may not be the ones who attend (Dorsett et al. 2014; Portwood et al. 2015; Husain et al. 2016, 2018; Tracey

et al. 2016). Schools therefore think need to think carefully before undertaking such activities, and plan and support them accordingly (see below).

Current parent engagement activity in schools in England

The majority of schools surveyed recognise the importance of parent engagement, with the vast majority (80%) believing that engaging parents is the responsibility of all staff. This is clearly positive insofar as it indicates a willingness to act. However, the survey and subsequent interviews also showed that there is considerable scope to improve current practice, particularly in the light of the evidence reviewed here. Much of what schools do now involves passive communication with parents (e.g. providing information and materials) whereas what is needed is more active engagement (e.g. parent training, support with early literacy) of the kind identified by this study. There can also be a tendency to focus on the more challenging parents and children only, rather than integrating parent engagement across the school in a holistic fashion. Certainly, there is relatively little integration with the wider community. Further, relatively few schools (37%) currently provide staff with training about how to engage parents or have a plan for *how* they would like staff to work with parents (28%). Interviews with school staff highlight the difficulty of engaging so-called 'hard-to-reach' families and suggest that there is an assumption that they know how to engage parents and families in children's learning effectively. Finally, there is little meaningful monitoring and evaluation of the delivery, uptake and impact of parent engagement activities.

Towards a more effective approach

We recognise that schools face numerous challenges to supporting parental engagement in their children's learning, not least a lack of funding. However, this review highlights the types of activity and intervention that have promise. In addition to implementing and further testing some of these, and proceeding only carefully in those areas identified earlier in this chapter as requiring caution, what else might schools do? Several interlocking features of a more effective approach to supporting parents have emerged from the evidence reviewed, interviews, the wider literature and discussion within the project's expert advisory panel.

First, the wider literature stresses the importance of adopting a more holistic and sustained approach to parental engagement, so that it is integrated into school improvement plans and done in concert with the wider community (e.g. Epstein et al. 2018; Goodall 2018). One study in the review, which focused on parents of children with disabilities, was at pains to state that in addition to providing parents with new knowledge and skills on how to engage with schools it is necessary to change the behaviour of school staff and develop a collaborative and supportive school context (Goldman and Burke 2017). Generally, then, it makes sense for schools to have a written policy and guidance and training to support teachers; according to the survey, relatively few (28%) have this currently, and although the value of this has not been evaluated, it is considered likely to be part of fostering a holistic approach. Other key ingredients of an holistic approach include: a leader who prioritises parent engagement and ensures that it is integrated into school planning (i.e. assessing strengths and weaknesses of current practice, viewing parent engagement as core to school improvement and monitoring accordingly); and a plan for working in partnership with parents and the wider community that is informed by an understanding of families' lives, in

particular what facilitates and impedes their ability or willingness to support their children's learning (this will entail talking to parents).

Second, any plan for changing how a school supports parental engagement needs to address the support, resource and time required for all the staff who are involved in doing this, including classroom teachers, receptionists, parent support workers, playground assistants and lunchtime staff. This resonates with the wider principles of evidence-based implementation (Sharples et al. 2018), but in relation to parental engagement the following of what schools can do might be emphasised:

- having a clear expectation of what is, and isn't expected of different staff members in relation to parent engagement, and ensuring corresponding amounts of time are available;
- being clear about how parental engagement is intended to contribute towards overall school improvement priorities, so that all staff understand the potential benefits for both the school and pupils;
- ensuring an understanding of both the barriers to parental engagement and the strategies to address these – this is likely to require explicit training and follow-on support (e.g. building relationships, communication, identifying and responding to vulnerable families, cultural awareness);
- consciously planning how different strands of school activity can support parents' engagement in their children's learning;
- using trained professionals who have regular update meetings with supervisors to discuss any implementation challenges; and
- providing personal support for individual staff members when parental engagement becomes challenging or difficult.

Third, the process of school staff building positive and trusting relationships with parents over time is foundational. Communication should be two-way (including asking parents what they would find helpful in supporting their children's learning, and responding accordingly). Although this was not evaluated explicitly in the literature reviewed, schools could learn from one another about how to do this. Strategies are likely to need to include face-to-face contact, dedicated personnel and building links with community groups.

Fourth, more sustained and intensive approaches are likely to be needed to support parental engagement for some children, such as those struggling with early reading, those from disadvantaged backgrounds, and those with behavioural difficulties. It is important that targeting is done sensitively to avoid stigmatising, blaming or discouraging parents. One approach is to provide a universal offer but give extra support and encouragement to those with greater needs so that they are most likely to take up the opportunity. It is encouraging to note that several of the studies reviewed found that interventions were equally if not more effective for children from low-income backgrounds.

Fifth, concerted efforts are needed to engage parents who are perceived to be 'hard to reach'. According to reviews of the evidence, there are multiple reasons for why some parents are harder to engage in interventions (Axford et al. 2012; Boag-Munroe and Evangelou 2012; Pote et al. 2019). Organisational barriers invariably concern setting (i.e. where the intervention is delivered) and communications, both of which may relate to a

range of factors, including culture, language, literacy, use of professional jargon, difficulty in asking for help or articulating need and services not being interested or sufficiently visible. Parents' isolation from services may be involuntary (e.g. owing to language differences, poor health, long or unsociable work hours, lack of money, childcare issues, holiday) or voluntary (e.g. because engagement with services would be threatening or stigmatising). In an education context, parents' own poor experience of school can contribute to a reticence engage fully in children's learning. Some of these barriers are identified in studies in the review (e.g. Kraft et al. 2017).

The same reviews identify creative responses to such challenges, including: using parent ambassadors; communicating through new forms of media; advertising services in places frequented by families; translating promotion materials into relevant languages; being flexible about the location and timing of services to accommodate families' needs; making services welcoming, convenient and less intimidating (e.g. providing food and childcare, encouraging people to attend once for a 'try out'); re-presenting or re-branding the service to reduce stigma; using snowball or chain referral; holding meetings in appropriate buildings; employing staff who can relate to parents (e.g. parents from similar backgrounds, dedicated male staff to reach fathers); offering home visits, outreach services or transport for families who live in rural areas or lack means of travel; ensuring that materials and support are linguistically and culturally appropriate; offering incentives (e.g. gift card, raffle) and being willing to make repeated attempt to engage the families concerned (including face-to-face contact and reminders). Several studies examined for the review for this report make similar points (e.g. Anthony et al. 2014; Dawson-McLure et al. 2015; Pears et al. 2015; Portwood et al. 2015; Eisenhower et al. 2016; Stein 2017). Some of the interventions evaluated by studies in the review fostered parental ownership, for instance by personalising goal setting and the choice of activities (Bierman et al. 2015) or offering a menu of activities to choose from (Reynolds et al. 2014, 2016). The authors of one study also advised that existing resources in or around schools may be able to help with engagement activities, for example community groups or school-parent organisations (Eisenhower et al. 2016).

Sixth, as with other curriculum areas, schools need to plan, monitor and evaluate parental engagement. This includes starting with a clear objective: the improvement of pupil learning should be the ultimate aim, and parental engagement with the school is a stepping stone to parental engagement in learning, which helps achieve this. Next it is necessary to audit current practice, in particular listening to what less involved parents would find helpful to increase their involvement with school but ultimately their engagement with pupil learning, and stopping activities without clear benefits. Teachers should be consulted too, in particular to understand what they perceive to be the barriers to supporting parent engagement. Once strengths and needed changes are identified, it is possible to identify goals and set priorities, and then track whether planned activities happen and what effect they have. For example, this could include reviewing whether particular groups of parents find communications from school helpful, or attend meetings, or feel they have a voice in the decision-making process. This might lead to reviewing the approach, stopping certain activities if they are failing to engage parents, or embedding and extending activities found to be successful. According to the survey conducted for the present study there is relatively

little of this kind of monitoring activity in schools in England currently, but helpful resources exist (e.g. Epstein et al. 2018; Goodall 2018).

Seventh, teachers and other practitioners involved in implementing interventions for parents need strong communication skills and an ability to form positive working alliances with parents (Bierman et al. 2015). Accordingly, they need to be trained in how to engage with parents. This kind of training was provided in some of the interventions in the evidence review (e.g. Brotman et al. 2013, 2016; Pears et al. 2013, 2015; Anthony et al. 2014; Dawson-McLure et al. 2015; Reynolds et al. 2016) but not evaluated per se. Indeed, with the exception of a single study of the Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management programme (Herman and Reinke 2017) there is a dearth of studies examining the effectiveness of training teachers in parent engagement. Again, there are useful sources to support a more integrated approach to training teachers in parent engagement (e.g. Epstein et al. 2018; Goodall 2018), but there is also a need to introduce such content in initial teacher training (Mutton et al. 2018). This should go beyond the functional aspects to include the wider social and cultural factors that affect family life generally and parents' ability to support their children's learning specifically.

Teachers also need time to communicate with parents; it has been suggested that this could be reallocated from other non-academic duties, particularly if some of it needs to happen outside of regular school hours (Kraft and Dougherty 2013), although this comes with its own challenges. Building in-school expertise in parent engagement is essential to take into account the turnover of individual teaching and administrative staff (Smolkowski et al. 2017) and since it is unrealistic for specialist staff to work with every child who needs support and their teacher and family (Herman and Reinke 2017). This is not to say that it should be left to teachers to support parents. Writing in an early years context, O'Connor et al. (2017) advised that parenting interventions are best delivered by professionally qualified staff (e.g. those with a background in social work, teaching, counselling, teaching, nursing): "Qualified educators already have knowledge of children's social, emotional, cognitive and physical development, play and learning pedagogies and early childhood language and literacy development. By providing educators with more nuanced parent-child relationship knowledge and supporting them to build strong relationships with children and parents they may then be able to foster and nurture the parent–child relationship" (p.417).

Finally, it is necessary as far as possible to implement interventions with fidelity to core components (e.g. Kim et al. 2017). As will be seen in the next section of this chapter, there is still much to be learnt about the nature and importance of fidelity and how to promote it, but it is generally acknowledged that psychosocial interventions – including those for parents – are more likely to be effective if they are implemented faithfully to the design (Axford et al. 2017). Studies in this review note that fidelity can be promoted through various means, including manuals, guidelines, modelling, regular supervision, observation with feedback, monitoring, and telephone or email help for troubleshooting (Biggart et al. 2013; Anthony et al. 2014; Frey et al. 2015; Goux et al. 2017; Sheridan et al. 2017a). Without contradiction, they also acknowledge a need for differentiation in order to be responsive to the unique situation of different children and families (e.g. Biggart et al. 2013; Frey et al. 2015), for example by adapting lessons and recruitment strategies (Kim et al. 2017), and the

importance of conducting a capacity or readiness assessment beforehand (Smolkowski et al. 2017).

Areas requiring further research

Although the research indicates promising avenues for intervention, it also identifies significant gaps in knowledge in the field. Reflecting the structure of the evidence review, recommendations for further research are divided here into two categories: those concerning the relationship between parent involvement in children's learning and a range of academic and non-academic outcomes; and those focusing on the effectiveness of interventions to promote parent engagement.

Starting with the first of these, while a clear positive relationship between parental involvement in children's learning and a range of academic and non-academic outcomes has been established, important questions for further research remain. First, the correlational nature of many studies means that it is sometimes difficult to establish the extent to which aspects of parenting are contributing to outcomes, or whether children's attainment and behaviour are affecting parenting (McWayne et al. 2013; Pinquart 2016). Second, there is a need to understand better how far socio-demographic factors such as ethnicity and school factors such as subject area moderate the relationship between parenting and children's learning (McWayne et al. 2013; Wilder 2014). Third, there is scope to explore in more depth the processes through which parental involvement improves learning outcomes, in other words the mediating factors (McWayne et al. 2013). Fourth, the lack of a positive impact of parental involvement in homework on children's academic outcomes warrants additional investigation into why this is (Wilder 2014). Lastly, the observed importance of parent expectations for children's learning outcomes suggests that it would be valuable to examine how they can be influenced through specific interventions (Castro et al. 2015).

Turning to the second of the two categories identified above, research recommendations for effectiveness research come from systematic reviews and primary studies. Starting with the systematic reviews, the first message, which emerged strongly from several such studies, concerns the requirement for more rigorously designed and executed evaluations (See and Gorard 2013, 2015b; See 2015a/b; Higgins and Katsipataki 2015). Specifically, there is a need for more high-quality RCTs that focus on the impact of interventions on children's attainment, particularly in the UK. The corollary of this is that care needs to be taken to avoid claiming evidence of effectiveness where the research does not warrant it. Second, several reviews highlight other aspects of study design that need to be attended to, including longer-term effects – especially in the context of early years interventions (Grindal et al. 2016) – and exploring potential moderators such as income level – for instance, in relation to summer learning programmes (Kim and Quinn 2013). Third, it is necessary to prise open the black box of intervention effectiveness and understand at a more granular level what is going on. For example, which aspects of parent involvement are more important for children's learning outcomes (Higgins and Katsipataki 2015), and for summer learning programmes are class- or home-based approaches more effective and to what extent does the amount of time spent on literacy affect outcomes (Kim and Quinn 2013)? Similarly, given the association between longer-term home visiting programmes and the use of active modelling, to what extent is the latter important in the early years (Grindal et al. 2016)? Fourth, in relation to improving parent engagement for children with disabilities or

special educational needs, there is a need for more experimental research into interventions that work not just with parents but also with the wider school system and for evaluations to focus on outcomes besides parental participation in meetings (Goldman and Burke 2017). Finally, in the early years setting at least, there is a case for avoiding the temptation to import new interventions – relatively few of which are tested and effective anyway – and to test and seek to improve what exists (O'Connor et al. 2017).

Moving onto primary studies of intervention effectiveness, two specific areas identified as requiring further research are how to increase and develop parent expectations and therefore tap unfulfilled potential given their contribution to children's learning outcomes (Bierman et al. 2015; Bierman and Loughlin-Presnal 2017), and how to support fathers (Hurwitz et al. 2015). Aside from these, several areas for further research cut across the different age ranges and types of intervention. These fall into three groups, with some echoing the messages from systematic reviews: whether the intervention works and for whom; how the intervention works and how to can be optimised; and what is necessary to ensure effectiveness in a real-world setting.

Does the intervention work, and for whom?

Where an intervention is found to be effective in a quasi-experimental study, a case is sometimes made for undertaking a further evaluation in which participants are randomised to intervention or control conditions (Frey et al. 2015). Even where RCTs have been conducted, there is sometimes acknowledgement that their design and execution could be improved. For example, there is a need for trials in which there is a clearer record of what the control group receives (Sumi et al. 2013) and, where possible, an active control so as to minimise the likelihood of a placebo effect (Anthony et al. 2014). Some evaluators are also alert to the need to explore potential adverse effects of interventions (e.g. Kraft and Rogers 2015); although not cited in this particular study, examples of possible harmful intervention effects include parents punishing children if they don't do homework, or parents feeling more stressed, or school staff resenting being asked to 'police' family life.

Another common theme as regards establishing effectiveness is the need for long-term follow-up to see if effects observed in the short-term – typically post-intervention – are maintained over time after initial support is withdrawn (Biggart et al. 2013; Lam et al. 2013; Pears et al. 2013; Sumi et al. 2013; Reynolds et al. 2014; Dawson-McLure et al. 2015; Frey et al. 2015; Colgate and Ginns 2016; Camacho and Alves 2017). This might include considering whether booster sessions are needed to produce sustained effects (Sheridan et al. 2017b) and examining if multi-year implementation produces cumulative effects (Kim et al. 2016). Longer-term follow-ups are sometimes also advocated if no effects are seen in the short-term on the grounds that they take time to emerge (e.g. Husain et al. 2016).

Evaluators also often identify the need to work out in more detail which parents or children benefit the most from the intervention. This is reflected in a call for the analysis of sub-group effects or moderator effects, such as whether programme effectiveness is differentiated according to baseline risk (Dawson-McLure et al. 2015; Kraft and Rogers 2015; Eisenhower et al. 2016), child gender (Dawson-McLure et al. 2015) or the school context (Kraft and Dougherty 2013). Larger studies with sufficient statistic power to explore heterogeneous effects may be required (Kraft and Dougherty 2013), and there may also be

a case for studies that target the intervention more carefully at a specified group, for example based on gender or level of baseline need (Tracey et al. 2016).

In some cases, evaluators advocate using better or different measures, either to see if something that was found to be ineffective is more effective on a different indicator, or to increase confidence in positive effects already observed. This commonly entails applying direct measures of children's academic performance or behaviour rather than relying solely on teacher-rated or parent-rated measures (e.g. Lam et al. 2013; Reynolds et al. 2014; Frey et al. 2015; Sheridan et al. 2017), or using observation of parenting behaviour to complete parent-rated measures (e.g. Pears et al. 2015), or focusing more on wider (beyond primary) outcomes (e.g. Tracey et al. 2016). It may also involve not relying on child self-report, as in the call for teacher-report of child social responsibility (Carbonero et al. 2017). Sometimes there is also a call for developing new measures of a specific phenomenon. For instance, Camacho and Alves (2017) make the case for developing and validating measures of home literacy environment that include reading and writing practice in the family. Similarly, Herman and Reinke (2017) advocate assessing parent perceptions of their own involvement and of teacher efforts in involving them in school (i.e. not relying on teacher ratings), and Frey et al. (2015) identify the need for measures of hypothesised mediators, such as parent motivation and parenting practices. Kutash et al. (2013) call for more fully developed measures of parent-teacher engagement, and Cheung and McBride (2017) argue for outcome measures that better fit the cultural context.

Lastly for this sub-section, evaluators often caution against extrapolating from results in one context or with one population and advocate testing to see whether positive results can be replicated (or, if the results are null or negative in the original setting, to see if this might be context-specific). This might entail testing the intervention in different or wider contexts (e.g. different educational districts, other school settings), with other populations (e.g. by age, gender or SES) or when different types of implementation support are provided (Kraft and Dougherty 2013; Kutash et al. 2013; Sumi et al. 2013; Anthony et al. 2014; Frey et al. 2015; Kraft and Rogers 2015; Husain et al. 2016; Carbonero et al. 2017; Heddy and Sinatra 2017; Sheridan et al. 2017). The replication of positive results increases confidence in the external validity of results and the generalisability of intervention effectiveness.

How does the intervention work?

There is a growing tendency in the field of intervention effectiveness research generally to move beyond establishing that something 'works' to understanding why and how this happens. This is reflected in studies of interventions to support parent engagement in their children's learning, with calls to examine the mediational pathways or mechanisms underlying change (Pears et al. 2013; Sheridan et al. 2013; Dawson-McLure et al. 2015; Brotman et al 2016; Sommer et al. 2017). Examples include exploring whether the effect of summer reading programme on reading comprehension is mediated by gains in children's reading stamina and higher-order comprehension processes (Kim et al. 2016), and whether gains in one outcome (e.g. internalising behaviour) lead to gains in another (e.g. externalising behaviour) (Eisenhower et al. 2016).

Relatedly, evaluators are often aware that there is scope to improve interventions in order to achieve stronger effects, and so recommend exploring which components contribute to

specified outcomes and how modifications might achieve a greater impact (Lam et al. 2013; Sommer et al. 2017). Specific examples of topics identified for further research include: the relative contribution of home (parent-focused) and school (child-focused) components in a home-school partnership approach (Biggart et al. 2013; Frey et al. 2015); the types of parent support and home-based book reading routines that foster children's reading skills (Kim et al. 2016); and the optimal content, timing and frequency of text messages for parents (Bergman and Chan 2017). The task of answering such questions may require further data collection. For instance, Herman and Reinke (2017) advocate including measures of parent-teacher and teacher-student interactions at multiple time points to allow more fine-tuned analyses of when and how changes in teacher perceptions contribute to student success. Ultimately, these kinds of analysis should make it possible to identify core components or active ingredients (Sheridan et al. 2017b).

Having found some evidence of effectiveness, evaluators are often keen to work out how to improve effectiveness by optimising the intervention. In relation to text messaging programmes, for example, there is interest in the added value of adjusting the frequency and content of messages or changing the delivery method (Kraft and Rogers 2015), or potentially combining text messages over the summer with addressing challenges that limit parents' ability to provide enriching literacy activities for children (by providing summer reading materials or transport to libraries and museums) (Kraft and Monti-Nussbaum 2017). Colgate and Ginns (2016) consider the benefit of varying the content of social norm information provided to parents by making it more personal. Optimising the intervention is also partly about finding a healthy equilibrium in which maximum gain is achieved for least effort. For example, Kraft and Dougherty (2013) advocate exploring the effect of less frequent teacher-family communication on longer term outcomes such as grades, standardised test scores and high school graduation rates: "Our goal as researchers should be to identify the type and frequency of teacher-family communication that sustains student engagement throughout the year without overwhelming teachers or causing them to forgo other important aspects of their professional practice" (p.220).

What is necessary to achieve impact?

In the case of effective interventions there is a need to work out how best to ensure fidelity at scale, in other words what support is needed and what adaptations are permitted or even necessary to enable the programme to be implemented well in authentic and less controlled settings (Frey et al. 2015; Sheridan et al. 2017b). A precursor to this is simply developing a better understanding of the relationship between fidelity and effectiveness (Eisenhower et al. 2016) and what constitutes a necessary and sufficient dose of the intervention to improve parent and child outcomes (Kutash et al. 2013). Finding the optimum blend of fidelity and adaptation is important (Smolkowski et al. 2017).

A frequently cited challenge and therefore area for further research is how to engage parents in interventions. This applies both to effective and ineffective interventions – in the case of the latter, the evaluators' hypothesis is often that effectiveness would be seen with better parent participation – and involves identifying and addressing the factors that are predictive of parent recruitment and retention (Sheridan et al. 2013; Kutash et al. 2013; Avvisati et al. 2014; Pears et al. 2015; Portwood et al. 2015; Eisenhower et al. 2016; Husain et al. 2016; Tracey et al. 2016). In addition to demographic factors, the parents' past

experience of education and other services is likely to be a consideration, as is the nature and delivery of the intervention in question (e.g. timing, location).

Conclusions

While parent engagement in children's learning is associated with improved academic outcomes at all ages, the evidence is weak by comparison on the best approaches that schools and early years settings can take to *influence* what parents do in a way that improves children's learning, especially in the UK. There are areas of promise, however, such as supporting parents to help their children read via home and family literacy interventions, and improving school-home communication, including via text message. Equally, the evidence sounds a cautionary note about some activities, such as engaging parents directly with homework or undertaking home visiting that it is insufficiently intensive and thin on active learning opportunities for parents. The importance of early years settings and schools supporting parents' engagement in their children's learning is widely acknowledged by head teachers and other school leaders in England, but the survey and interviews also demonstrated that there is room to improve current activity in this respect; together, these indicate potential traction for the research messages. However, improving outcomes in this area requires more than starting new types of intervention and stopping others; training teachers in how to engage with parents – especially those who are 'hard to reach' – and monitoring and evaluating parent engagement activities are among several features of a more holistic and sustained approach. As efforts are made to strengthen practice, acknowledged limitations in the evidence base also need to be addressed, with a focus on understanding better what works for whom, in what context and how, and working out how to implement interventions effectively in real-world settings.

Summary of key points

Parental engagement in children's learning is associated with improved academic outcomes at all ages. The association is strongest when parent engagement is defined as parents' expectations for their children's academic achievement.

The evidence is weak by comparison on the best approaches that schools and early years settings can take to *influence* what parents do in a way that improves children's learning, especially in the UK.

However, there are four areas of promise:

- supporting parents to help their children read via home and family literacy interventions;
- classroom and home-based summer reading interventions;
- school-home communication, including via text message; and
- structured, targeted interventions for parents aimed at improving children's social, emotional and behavioural outcomes, which could support learning.

By contrast, the following activities require caution:

- giving parents general information on child development or curriculum content (unless it is linked to specific actions that they can take to support learning);

- home visiting (unless it is sufficiently intensive and incudes active learning for parents);
- engaging parents directly with homework; and
- offering regular group sessions for parents, which can be helpful but requires concerted efforts to ensure adequate attendance.

The majority of school leaders surveyed recognise the importance of parent engagement, with the majority believing it to be the responsibility of all staff. However, and notwithstanding the challenging financial climate in which schools in England currently operate, there is scope to improve practice, for example by:

- using less passive communication with parents (e.g. simply providing information and materials) and more active engagement (e.g. parent training, early literacy support);
- providing staff with training and support in parent engagement (especially for so-called 'hard-to-reach' families); and
- better monitoring and evaluation of the delivery, uptake and impact of parent engagement activities.

Several interlocking features of a more effective approach to schools supporting parents' engagement in their children's learning have emerged from the evidence reviewed, the interviews, the wider literature and discussion within the project's expert advisory panel:

- adopting a more holistic and sustained model;
- providing the support, resources and time required for school staff to support parents;
- building positive and trusting relationships with parents;
- using more sustained and intensive approaches to support parental engagement for children who are struggling with early reading, from disadvantaged backgrounds or displaying behavioural difficulties;
- making concerted efforts to engage so-called 'hard-to-reach' parents;
- planning, monitoring and evaluating parental engagement activities;
- training teachers in how to engage with parents but also using other trained professionals; and
- supporting the implementation of intervention with fidelity to core components while allowing some degree of differentiation for context and user group.

Further research on the positive association between parent engagement in children's learning and children's learning outcomes needs to look at:

- the direction of the relationship;
- moderators of the relationship; and
- the processes through which the relationship operates.

Future research on the effectiveness of interventions to promote parent engagement in children's learning should focus on:

- understanding better what works for whom, and in what context, including more high-quality RCTs, analyses of sub-group effects and long-term effectiveness, and replication studies in different contexts or with different populations;

- exploring how interventions work, in other words the mechanisms of effectiveness, the relative contribution of different intervention components for specified outcomes and how interventions might be optimised; and
- working out how to achieve adequate implementation fidelity in real-world settings, which includes maximising parent recruitment and retention.

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Appendix A: Focused questions

A. What is effective parent engagement in children's learning?

1. (a) How have studies defined and operationalised parent engagement in children's learning, (b) how does this differ from other related terms, e.g. 'parent involvement', and (c) how does parent engagement in children's learning change as children get older (continuities and discontinuities)?
2. What forms of parent engagement in children's learning (i.e. parenting practices / styles / activities) are associated with improved learning outcomes at different ages?
3. (a) What is the strength of evidence for these different practices? (b) Where is the evidence contested? (e.g. parent help with homework?)
4. Do these effective practices differ by type of parent / child (socio-demographics, need)?
5. What is the impact of parenting practices on known or hypothesised mediators of learning outcomes (e.g. motivation, emotional well-being, perceived competence, attitudes to school)?
6. How can parent engagement in children's learning be assessed / characterised (in particular by schools)?

B. What can schools and early years settings do to improve parent engagement in their children's learning?

7. What activities led or coordinated by schools or early years settings are effective in supporting parent engagement in their children's learning?
8. What is the strength of evidence that these activities improve learning outcomes (particularly attainment) / reduce the achievement gap?
9. Does effectiveness differ by type of parent or child (e.g. socio-demographics) or by type of school (e.g. early years / primary / secondary, or state / independent)?
10. Through what mechanisms are these activities effective?
11. What factors are associated with effectiveness (context, implementation)? (e.g. how can schools help their staff to deliver effective parent engagement approaches well, and how can they support parents to participate in the associated activities?)
12. When and how should schools target parent engagement approaches? (e.g. is there evidence that focusing on transitions is particularly effective, and how should schools balance universal vs targeted approaches?)
13. Overall, what has strong evidence of effectiveness (and ineffectiveness / harm)?
14. Overall, what are areas of promise?
15. Overall, what future research is needed to address evidence gaps?

C. What is current practice?

16. (a) What do schools in England typically do to engage parents in children's learning, and (b) why?
17. Do they undertake particular activities aimed at parents of children from disadvantaged backgrounds?
18. Is there any evidence linking schools' parent engagement strategy to outcomes (especially attainment)?
19. What are the barriers and facilitators for schools in engaging parents in children's learning?

20. What resources do schools need / want / use to support efforts to engage parents in their children's learning?
21. (a) Who holds responsibility within the school for engaging parents in their children's learning, and (b) is there a parent engagement policy?
22. Where are the 'lever points'? (i.e. where are the gaps between evidence and practice?)
23. How much priority is accorded to engaging parents in their children's learning relative to other school activities designed to improve attainment?
24. How do staff learn about engaging parents in their children's learning (i.e. how do they know what to do)?
25. Do schools evaluate their activity to engage parents in children's learning, and if so how?

Appendix B: Search strategies

ERIC & AEI search strategy via ProQuest

(TI,AB(parent* NEAR/2 (involvement OR engagement OR expectation* OR collaboration OR partnership*)) OR TI,AB(parent* NEAR (engaging or engagement or practices or style* or activities or participation)) OR TI,AB(parent* P/2 (help* OR support*)) OR TI,AB(Involving P/2 parent*) OR TI,AB((mother* or father* or caregiver* or family or families) N/2 (involvement or engagement or expectation* or collaboration or partnership)) OR TI,AB((mother* or father* or caregiver* or family or families) NEAR (engaging or practices or activities or style* or participation or supervision)) OR TI,AB(involving P/2 (mother* or father* or family or families)) OR TI,AB(involving P/2 (mother* or father* or family or families)) OR TI,AB("home learning environment*")) AND (TI,AB((reading or homework) N/4 (assist* or help*)) OR TI,AB(Learn* P/3 (talk or read)) OR TI,AB(school* or classroom*) OR TI,AB(targets or grades or exam* or scores or qualification* or tests) OR TI,AB((learning or education* or achievement or academic) P/2 outcome*) OR TI,AB((Achieve or achieved) P/2 results) OR TI,AB(literacy or numeracy or math*)) AND (TI,AB(randomized or randomised) OR TI,AB(randomly) OR TI,AB(groups) OR TI,AB(control or controlled) OR TI,AB(systematic*) OR TI,AB(Searched N/3 (databases or ERIC or "education research complete" or "education index")) OR TI,AB(trial) OR TI,AB(experiment or experimental) OR TI,AB((Quasi experiment* or quasi-experiment* or quasiexperiment*)) OR TI,AB("time series"))

PsycINFO 1806 to December Week 2 2017 via OvidSp

#	Searches	Results
1	parent*.ti,ab.	240347
2	(parent* adj2 (involvement or engagement or expectation* or collaboration or partnership*)).ti,ab.	9962
3	(parent* adj2 (engaging or engagement or practices or style* or activities or participation)).ti,ab.	11467
4	(parent* adj (help* or support*)).ti,ab.	3571
5	(Involving adj parent*).ti,ab.	614
6	((mother* or father* or caregiver* or family or families) adj2 (involvement or engagement or expectation* or collaboration or partnership)).ti,ab.	7683
7	((mother* or father* or caregiver* or family or families) adj2 (engaging or practices or activities or style* or participation or supervision)).ti,ab.	7361
8	(involving adj (mother* or father* or family or families)).ti,ab.	555
9	((mother* or father* or family or families or caregiver*) adj2 help*).ti,ab.	4896
10	home learning environment*.ti,ab.	105
11	2 or 3 or 4 or 5 or 6 or 7 or 8 or 9 or 10	40176
12	((reading or homework) adj3 (assist* or help*)).ti,ab.	1070
13	(Learn* adj3 (talk or read)).ti,ab.	3908

14	(school* or classroom*).ti,ab.	388401
15	(targets or grades or exam* or scores or qualification*).ti,ab.	1273952
16	((learning or education* or achievement or academic) adj outcome*).ti,ab.	11059
17	((Achieve or achieved) adj2 results).ti,ab.	1751
18	(literacy or numeracy or math*).ti,ab.	80754
19	((score or attained or achieved) adj4 tests).ti,ab.	843
20	12 or 13 or 14 or 15 or 16 or 17 or 18 or 19	1548379
21	(randomised or randomized).ti,ab.	68776
22	randomly.ti,ab.	64510
23	groups.ti,ab.	449851
24	(control or controlled).ti,ab.	470248
25	systematic.ti,ab.	75937
26	(searched adj3 (databases or ERIC or education research complete or education index)).ti,ab.	3078
27	trial.ti,ab.	91217
28	(experiment or experimental).ti,ab.	262350
29	(Quasi experiment* or quasi-experiment* or quasiexperiment*).ti,ab.	10259
30	time series.ti,ab.	6889
31	21 or 22 or 23 or 24 or 25 or 26 or 27 or 28 or 29 or 30	1137173
32	11 and 20 and 31	6296
33	1 and 14 and 32	2597
34	limit 33 to yr="2013 -Current"	791

ASSIA via ProQuest

(((TI,AB(parent* NEAR/2 (involvement OR engagement OR expectation* OR collaboration OR partnership*)) OR TI,AB(parent* NEAR/4 (engaging OR engagement OR practices OR style* OR activities OR participation)) OR TI,AB(parent* PRE/2 (help* OR support*)) OR TI,AB(Involving PRE/2 parent*) OR TI,AB((mother* OR father* OR caregiver* OR family OR families) NEAR/2 (involvement OR engagement OR expectation* OR collaboration OR partnership)) OR TI,AB((mother* OR father* OR caregiver* OR family OR families) NEAR/4 (engaging OR practices OR activities OR style* OR participation OR supervision)) OR TI,AB(involving PRE/2 (mother* OR father* OR family OR families)) OR TI,AB(involving PRE/2 (mother* OR father* OR family OR families)) OR TI,AB("home learning environment*")) AND (TI,AB((reading OR homework) NEAR/4 (assist* OR help*)) OR TI,AB(Learn* PRE/3 (talk OR read)) OR TI,AB(school* OR classroom*) OR TI,AB(targets OR grades OR exam* OR scores OR qualification* OR tests) OR TI,AB((learning OR education* OR achievement OR academic) PRE/2 outcome*) OR TI,AB((Achieve OR achieved) PRE/2 results) OR TI,AB(literacy OR numerary OR math*)) AND (TI,AB(randomized OR randomised) OR TI,AB(randomly) OR TI,AB(groups) OR TI,AB(control OR controlled) OR TI,AB(systematic*) OR TI,AB(Searched NEAR/3 (databases OR ERIC OR "education research complete" OR "education index")) OR TI,AB(trial) OR TI,AB(experiment OR experimental) OR TI,AB((Quasi experiment* OR quasi-

experiment* OR quasiexperiment*)) OR TI,AB("time series"))) AND pd(20130101-20171201)) AND TI,AB(school* OR classroom* OR education)

Education Research Complete and British Education Index via EBSCOhost

#	Query	Limiters/Expanders	Results
S32	S10 AND S18 AND S30	Limiters - Published Date: 20130101-20181231 Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	775
S31	S10 AND S18 AND S30	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	2,277
S30	S19 OR S20 OR S21 OR S22 OR S23 OR S24 OR S25 OR S26 OR S27 OR S28 OR S29	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	389,247
S29	TI "time series" OR AB "time series"	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	1,649
S28	TI (Quasi experiment* or quasi-experiment* or quasiexperiment*) OR AB (Quasi experiment* or quasi-experiment* or quasiexperiment*)	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	3,971
S27	TI (experiment or experimental) OR AB (experiment or experimental)	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	69,543
S26	TI trial OR AB trial	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	23,923
S25	TI (Searched N3 (databases or ERIC or “education research complete” or “education index”)) OR AB (Searched N3 (databases or ERIC or “education research complete” or “education index”))	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	561
S24	TI systematic* OR AB systematic*	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	24,401
S23	DE "Randomized Controlled Trials"	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	3,889
S22	TI (control or controlled) OR AB (control or controlled)	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	101,011
S21	TI groups OR AB groups	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	229,976
S20	TI randomly OR AB randomly	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	13,145

S19	TI (randomized or randomised) OR AB (randomized or randomised)	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	11,329
S18	S11 OR S12 OR S13 OR S14 OR S15 OR S16 OR S17	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	1,225,049
S17	TI (literacy or numeracy or math*) OR AB (literacy or numeracy or math*)	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	138,538
S16	TI ((Achieve or achieved) W2 results) OR AB ((Achieve or achieved) W2 results)	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	840
S15	TI ((learning or education* or achievement or academic) W2 outcome*) OR AB ((learning or education* or achievement or academic) W2 outcome*)	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	14,968
S14	TI (targets or grades or exam* or scores or qualification* or tests) OR AB (targets or grades or exam* or scores or qualification* or tests)	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	583,259
S13	TI (school* or classroom*) OR AB (school* or classroom*)	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	728,710
S12	TI (Learn* W3 (talk or read)) OR AB (Learn* W3 (talk or read))	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	3,033
S11	TI ((reading or homework) N4 (assist* or help*)) OR AB ((reading or homework) N4 (assist* or help*))	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	2,548
S10	S1 OR S2 OR S3 OR S4 OR S5 OR S6 OR S7 OR S8 OR S9	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	16,459
S9	TI “home learning environment*” OR AB “home learning environment*”	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	80
S8	TI ((mother* or father* or family or families or caregiver*) W2 help*) OR AB ((mother* or father* or family or families or caregiver*) W2 help*)	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	809
S7	TI (involving W2 (mother* or father* or family or families)) OR AB (involving W2 (mother* or father* or family or families))	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	375
S6	TI ((mother* or father* or caregiver* or family or families) N (engaging or practices or activities or style* or participation or supervision)) OR AB ((mother* or father* or caregiver* or family or	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	38

	families) N (engaging or practices or activities or style* or participation or supervision))		
S5	TI ((mother* or father* or caregiver* or family or families) N2 (involvement or engagement or expectation* or collaboration or partnership)) OR AB ((mother* or father* or caregiver* or family or families) N2 (involvement or engagement or expectation* or collaboration or partnership))	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	4,399
S4	TI Involving W2 parent* OR AB Involving W2 parent*	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	554
S3	TI (parent* W2 (help* OR support*)) OR AB (parent* W2 (help* OR support*))	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	4,111
S2	TI (parent* N (engaging or engagement or practices or style* or activities or participation)) OR AB (parent* N (engaging or engagement or practices or style* or activities or participation))	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	53
S1	TI (parent* N2 (involvement or engagement or expectation* or collaboration or partnership*)) OR AB (parent* N2 (involvement or engagement or expectation* or collaboration or partnership*))	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	7,669

Scopus

((TITLE-ABS-KEY (*"parental involvement"* AND *school**)) OR (TITLE-ABS-KEY (*"involvement of parent*"* AND *school**)) OR (TITLE-ABS-KEY (*"participation of parent*"* AND *school**)) OR (TITLE-ABS-KEY (*"parent* participation"* AND *school**)) OR (TITLE-ABS-KEY (*"parent* engagement"* AND *school**))) AND (TITLE-ABS-KEY (*learning* OR *results* OR *tests* OR *exam** OR *numeracy* OR *literacy* OR *math** OR *reading*)) AND ((TITLE-ABS-KEY (*randomised* OR *randomized*)) OR (TITLE-ABS-KEY (*"systematic review"*)) OR (TITLE-ABS-KEY (*quasi-experimental* OR *"time series"*))) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , *2017*) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , *2016*) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , *2015*) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , *2014*) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , *2013*))
Social Policy and Practice via OvidSp

Database: Social Policy and Practice <201710>
Search Strategy:
---
1 parent*.ti,ab. (40170)
2 (parent* adj2 (involvement or engagement or expectation* or collaboration or partnership*)).ti,ab. (1718)

3 (parent* adj2 (engaging or engagement or practices or style* or activities or participation)).ti,ab. (1367)
4 (parent* adj (help* or support*)).ti,ab. (831)
5 (Involving adj parent*).ti,ab. (204)
6 ((mother* or father* or caregiver* or family or families) adj2 (involvement or engagement or expectation* or collaboration or partnership)).ti,ab. (1302)
7 ((mother* or father* or caregiver* or family or families) adj2 (engaging or practices or activities or style* or participation or supervision)).ti,ab. (982)
8 (involving adj (mother* or father* or family or families)).ti,ab. (164)
9 ((mother* or father* or family or families or caregiver*) adj2 help*).ti,ab. (1252)
10 home learning environment*.ti,ab. (67)
11 2 or 3 or 4 or 5 or 6 or 7 or 8 or 9 or 10 (6985)
12 ((reading or homework) adj3 (assist* or help*)).ti,ab. (61)
13 (Learn* adj3 (talk or read)).ti,ab. (107)
14 (school* or classroom*).ti,ab. (39572)
15 (targets or grades or exam* or scores or qualification*).ti,ab. (96565)
16 ((learning or education* or achievement or academic) adj outcome*).ti,ab. (862)
17 ((Achieve or achieved) adj2 results).ti,ab. (110)
18 (literacy or numeracy or math*).ti,ab. (3030)
19 ((score or attained or achieved) adj4 tests).ti,ab. (11)
20 12 or 13 or 14 or 15 or 16 or 17 or 18 or 19 (127604)
21 (randomised or randomized).ti,ab. (2642)
22 randomly.ti,ab. (1259)
23 groups.ti,ab. (29468)
24 (control or controlled).ti,ab. (14681)
25 systematic.ti,ab. (4710)
26 (searched adj3 (databases or ERIC or education research complete or education index)).ti,ab. (218)
27 trial.ti,ab. (2908)
28 (experiment or experimental).ti,ab. (2101)
29 (Quasi experiment* or quasi-experiment* or quasiexperiment*).ti,ab. (337)
30 time series.ti,ab. (133)
31 21 or 22 or 23 or 24 or 25 or 26 or 27 or 28 or 29 or 30 (49590)
32 11 and 20 and 31 (492)
33 limit 32 to yr="2013 -Current" (108)

SSCI via Web of Science

# 27	217	#26 AND #17 AND #10 Indexes=SSCI Timespan=2013-2017
# 26	78,731	#25 OR #24 OR #23 OR #22 OR #21 OR #20 OR #19 OR #18 Indexes=SSCI Timespan=2013-2017
# 25	9,974	TS=("time series") Indexes=SSCI Timespan=2013-2017
# 24	9,373	TI=(experiment* or quasi-experiment*) Indexes=SSCI Timespan=2013-2017

# 23	19,040	TI=(trial) Indexes=SSCI Timespan=2013-2017
# 22	18,113	TS=("systematic review") Indexes=SSCI Timespan=2013-2017
# 21	17,170	TI=(systematic) Indexes=SSCI Timespan=2013-2017
# 20	3,316	TS=("randomised controlled trial") Indexes=SSCI Timespan=2013-2017
# 19	29,529	TS=("randomized controlled trial") Indexes=SSCI Timespan=2013-2017
# 18	15,127	TI=(randomized or randomised) Indexes=SSCI Timespan=2013-2017
# 17	131,399	#16 OR #15 OR #14 OR #13 OR #12 OR #11 Indexes=SSCI Timespan=2013-2017
# 16	8,340	TI=(literacy or numeracy or math*) Indexes=SSCI Timespan=2013-2017
# 15	969	TI=((learning or education* or achievement or academic) NEAR/2 outcome*) Indexes=SSCI Timespan=2013-2017
# 14	43,374	TI=(targets or grades or exam* or scores or qualification* or tests) Indexes=SSCI Timespan=2013-2017
# 13	87,128	TS=(school* or classroom*) Indexes=SSCI Timespan=2013-2017
# 12	279	TI=(Learn* NEAR/3 (talk or read)) Indexes=SSCI Timespan=2013-2017
# 11	48	TI=((reading or homework) NEAR/4 (assist* or help*)) Indexes=SSCI Timespan=2013-2017
# 10	7,894	#9 OR #8 OR #7 OR #6 OR #5 OR #4 OR #3 OR #2 OR #1 Indexes=SSCI Timespan=2013-2017
# 9	60	TS=“home learning environment*” Indexes=SSCI Timespan=2013-2017
# 8	101	TI=((mother* or father* or family or families) NEAR/2 help*) Indexes=SSCI Timespan=2013-2017
# 7	65	TI=(involving NEAR/1 (mother* or father* or family or families)) Indexes=SSCI Timespan=2013-2017
# 6	509	TI=((mother* or father* or family or families) NEAR/1 (engaging or practices or activities or style* or participation or supervision)) Indexes=SSCI Timespan=2013-2017
# 5	514	TI=((mother* or father* or family or families) NEAR/2 (involvement or engagement or expectation* or collaboration or partnership)) Indexes=SSCI Timespan=2013-2017
# 4	626	TS=(Involving NEAR/2 parent*) Indexes=SSCI Timespan=2013-2017
# 3	613	TI=(parent* NEAR/2 (help* OR support*)) Indexes=SSCI Timespan=2013-2017

# 2	4,151	TS=(parent* NEAR/2 (engaging or engagement or practices or style* or activities or participation)) Indexes=SSCI Timespan=2013-2017
# 1	2,460	TS=(parent* NEAR/2 (involvement or engagement or expectation* or collaboration or partnership*)) Indexes=SSCI Timespan=2013-2017

ProQuest Theses and Dissertations

(((TI,AB(parent* NEAR/2 (involvement OR engagement OR expectation* OR collaboration OR partnership*)) OR TI,AB(parent* NEAR/4 (engaging OR engagement OR practices OR style* OR activities OR participation)) OR TI,AB(parent* PRE/2 (help* OR support*)) OR TI,AB(Involving PRE/2 parent*) OR TI,AB((mother* OR father* OR caregiver* OR family OR families) NEAR/2 (involvement OR engagement OR expectation* OR collaboration OR partnership)) OR TI,AB((mother* OR father* OR caregiver* OR family OR families) NEAR/4 (engaging OR practices OR activities OR style* OR participation OR supervision)) OR TI,AB(involving PRE/2 (mother* OR father* OR family OR families)) OR TI,AB(involving PRE/2 (mother* OR father* OR family OR families)) OR TI,AB("home learning environment*")) AND (TI,AB((reading OR homework) NEAR/4 (assist* OR help*)) OR TI,AB(Learn* PRE/3 (talk OR read)) OR TI,AB(school* OR classroom*) OR TI,AB(targets OR grades OR exam* OR scores OR qualification* OR tests) OR TI,AB((learning OR education* OR achievement OR academic) PRE/2 outcome*) OR TI,AB((Achieve OR achieved) PRE/2 results) OR TI,AB(literacy OR numerary OR math*)) AND (TI,AB(randomized OR randomised) OR TI,AB(randomly) OR TI,AB(groups) OR TI,AB(control OR controlled) OR TI,AB(systematic*) OR TI,AB(Searched NEAR/3 (databases OR ERIC OR "education research complete" OR "education index")) OR TI,AB(trial) OR TI,AB(experiment OR experimental) OR TI,AB((Quasi experiment* OR quasi-experiment* OR quasiexperiment*)) OR TI,AB("time series"))) AND pd(20130101-20171201)) AND TI,AB(school* OR classroom* OR education) AND TI,AB(parent*)

Appendix C: Data extraction categories and critical appraisal criteria

1a Systematic reviews

Study summary
Type of review
Review aim(s)
Type of studies eligible
Target group eligible
Target age range of children eligible
Exclusion criteria

Content
Number and type of studies included
Study sample(s)
Countries in which studies took place
Includes: communicating with children on school issues
Includes: supervising, assisting with and/or checking homework
Includes: reading with children
Includes: attendance at / participation in school activities
Includes: communicating with the school
Includes: creating a positive home learning environment
Parent behaviours
Parent attitudes
Parent expectations
Parenting style

Critical appraisal
Reviewed addresses a clearly focused question?
Review authors looked for right type of papers?
All important, relevant studies included?
Review authors did enough to assess quality of studies?
What results are presented?
Precision of results
If results combined, was it reasonable to do so?
Can results be applied in England?
Was an 'a priori' design reported?
Was there duplicate study selection and data extraction?
Was a comprehensive literature search performed?
Did the authors include reports regardless of publication type?
Was a list of studies (included and excluded) provided?
Were the characteristics of included studies provided?
Was the scientific quality of the included studies assessed?
Was the scientific quality of the included studies used appropriately in formatting conclusions?
Were the methods used to combine the findings of the studies appropriate?
Was the likelihood of publication bias assessed?

Was the conflict of interest included?

Results (narrative)
Child academic attainment outcomes
Child related learning outcomes
Child behaviour outcomes
Moderators
Author conclusions

Other information
How is parent engagement defined?
How is parent engagement measured?
Author research recommendations

1b Systematic reviews

Study summary
Type of review
Review aim(s)
Type of studies eligible
Type of interventions eligible
Target group eligible
Target age range of children eligible
Exclusion criteria
Is main focus parent engagement, child outcomes or both?

Content
Number and type of studies included
Type(s) of intervention reviewed
Aim(s) of intervention(s)
Content
Target group(s)
Setting(s)
Duration of interventions
Number of sessions / contacts
Frequency of sessions / contacts
Length of sessions / contacts
Mode(s) of delivery
Implementer(s)
Implementer expertise and training
Theoretical underpinning
Countries in which studies took place
Includes studies delivered in or by early years setting
Includes studies delivered in or by primary school
Includes studies delivered in or by secondary school
Includes home-school connections

Includes wider community collaborations
Focus is parenting
Focus is communicating
Focus is volunteering
Focus is family learning
Focus is decision-making
Focus is collaboration with the community

Critical appraisal
Reviewed addresses a clearly focused question?
Review authors looked for right type of papers?
All important, relevant studies included?
Review authors did enough to assess quality of studies?
What results are presented?
Precision of results
If results combined, was it reasonable to do so?
Can results be applied in England?
Was an 'a priori' design reported?
Was there duplicate study selection and data extraction?
Was a comprehensive literature search performed?
Did the authors include reports regardless of publication type?
Was a list of studies (included and excluded provided)?
Were the characteristics of included studies provided?
Was the scientific quality of the included studies assessed?
Was the scientific quality of the included studies used appropriately in formatting conclusions?
Were the methods used to combine the findings of the studies appropriate?
Was the likelihood of publication bias assessed?
Was the conflict of interest included?

Results
Point at which outcomes were measured
Child academic attainment outcomes
Narrative summary of results
Child related learning outcomes measured
Narrative summary of results
Child behaviour outcomes
Narrative summary of results
Parent engagement outcomes
Narrative summary of results
Author conclusions

Other information
How best to engage children / families with particular needs
Messages on effective implementation
Messages on implementer skills, training and experience
Messages on context

Author research recommendation

1b RCTs / QEDs

Study summary
Country
RCT or QED?
No. of study conditions
Control
Recruitment setting
Target group
Target age range of children
Unit of allocation
No. participants allocated to intervention condition
No. participants allocated to control condition
Child participant age - mean (SD)
Child participant gender
Child participant ethnicity
Primary outcome
Follow-up beyond end of intervention?

Intervention
Intervention name
Intervention category
Intervention aim
Child outcome(s)
Parent outcome(s)
Outcome categories
Setting(s)
Intervention content
Duration
Number of sessions / contacts
Frequency of sessions / contacts
Length of sessions / contacts
Mode of delivery
Implementer(s)
Implementer expertise and training
When delivered
Theoretical underpinning
Delivered in or by early years setting
Delivered in or by primary school
Delivered in or by secondary school
Includes parent participation at home
Includes parent participation in school
Includes home-school connections
Includes wider community collaborations

Focus is (1) parenting
Focus is (2) communicating
Focus is (3) volunteering
Focus is (4) family learning
Focus is (5) decision-making
Focus is (6) collaboration with the community
Focus on creating a learning context at home
Focus on creating a learning context at school

Critical appraisal
Addresses clearly focused issue?
Adequately powered to detect difference in primary outcome?
Randomisation method specified and valid?
Allocation concealment adequate?
Baseline data collected before random allocation?
Baseline equal or differences in baseline accounted for?
All participants accounted for
Groups treated equally?
Participants blind to treatment?
Implementers blind to treatment?
Data collectors blind to treatment?
Precision of estimate of effect
Can results be applied in England?
Intention to treat (ITT)?
Total attrition
Differential attrition?
Fidelity measured?

Results
Academic attainment outcomes (Child)
Summary of results
Related learning outcomes measured (Child)
Summary of results
Behaviour outcomes (child)
Summary of results
Parent engagement outcomes
Summary of results
Other outcomes
Summary of results
Moderator analysis?
Moderator results
Fidelity measure
Fidelity results

Other information
How best to engage children / families with particular needs
Messages on effective implementation

Messages on implementer skills, training and experience
Messages on context

Appendix D: Information sheet and consent form for interviews [Head Teachers / School Leads]

Information sheet for the 'Engaging parents in children's learning' project

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. We very much hope that you will decide to take part in the research.

What is the research project about?
The research aims to find out:

1. what is most effective in engaging parents in their children's learning
2. what schools in England are doing to engage parents in children's learning, and why
3. the extent to which what schools in England are doing reflects what international research suggests is most effective.

Who is paying for the research?
The research is funded by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF): https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk

Who is conducting the research?
We are a team from the Universities of Plymouth and Exeter. We are part of the South West Peninsula CLAHRC, an organisation dedicated to supporting the application of evidence and research in health and social services: http://clahrc-peninsula.nihr.ac.uk.

What is this interview about?
The interview is one part of the project. It aims to find out in more depth what schools in England are doing to engage parents in children's learning and what some of the associated issues are. These include (but are not limited to):

- how schools make decisions when deciding what to do to engage parents
- perceived barriers to engaging parents
- wider factors affecting school attainment that may benefit from engagement activity
- how disadvantage affects schools' ability to engage families in learning activities.

How long will it take to do?
The interview will take up to about 30 minutes.

How does it work?
The interview will take place by phone or skype. A member of the research team will ask mostly open-ended questions relating to the aims above. With your permission, we will audio record the interview and the interviewer will also take notes.

What's in it for me?
The information you provide will help us to provide a broad overview of what typical schools / early years settings in England are doing to engage parents in children's learning and some of the issues associated with doing this. Combined with the other parts of the research (literature review and survey of schools / early years settings in England), this will help the EEF to provide evidence-based and relevant guidance to schools / early years settings (including yours) on best practice in this area.

How do I take part?
If you decide that you would like to take part in an interview, please tick the relevant box below to say that you understand the information in this sheet and consent to take part on that basis. Then please email the completed form to Dr Jenny Lloyd: j.j.lloyd@exeter.ac.uk. If you do not wish to take part in the interview you do not need to do anything.

Can I refuse to answer questions I don't want to answer?
Yes. We hope that you will feel able to answer all questions but you can opt not to answer questions you do not want to answer. You can also decide to stop the interview at any point without having to give a reason.

What will happen to the information I provide?
The information you provide (audio recording and interviewer notes) will be stored in a password-protected folder on the secure PenCLAHRC server. Only members of the research team will be able to access the folder. All information will be confidential and stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998).

How will my information be used?
We will analyse the information from all interview respondents and then write it up in a report (which will also contain information from the literature review and survey). The EEF will use the report to help formulate guidance for schools on how best to engage parents in children's learning. Similar guidance on other topics can be seen here: https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/tools/guidance-reports/. We also hope to write one or more articles about the research for peer-reviewed scientific journals.

Will the information I provide be anonymous?
No identifying information will be included in the written notes or audio recording (or associated file names) i.e. we will use an anonymised identifier. A separate file will contain identifying information (i.e. linking anonymised identifier to name). Some of the information from interviews will appear in the report in aggregate form rather than at an individual level. If we use quotations from what you have said in the report, or use some of what you have said as a case example, and we think it will be helpful to provide some identifying information, we will ask for your written consent. If the school is to be identified we will also ask for written consent from your head teacher.

Will I get to see the results?
Yes. A publicly available copy of the report will be available on the EEF website for anyone to download. This is likely to be in July 2018, after the research finishes.

Who do I contact if I have any queries about the research?
If you have any queries or complaints about the research, please contact Nick Axford in the first instance:

Dr. Nick Axford
University of Plymouth
Room N10, ITTC Building
Plymouth Science Park
Plymouth PL6 8BX
nick.axford@plymouth.ac.uk
07856 686818

If you have any complaints about the conduct of research you may also contact Maurice Bottomley. Maurice is the Research Administrator to the Faculty Research Ethics Committee at the University of Plymouth:
hhsethics@plymouth.ac.uk

CONSENT

I have read and understood the information sheet and consent to take part in the research on that basis. Please sign below

Signature: …….

Please return this form by email to Dr. Jenny Lloyd: j.j.lloyd@exeter.ac.uk

Appendix E: Topic guide for interviews with head teachers and school leads

Parental involvement in learning
Preparation before each interview is essential. You will need to become familiar with the survey data and have it to hand as well as any particular reference to what other interviewees have said. In addition, there may be areas in which data is lacking after a number of interviews thus we will need to draw this out in subsequent interviews.
These considerations will be discussed with the interview team in phone catch ups and face to face meetings as the interviews progress.
There are many topics and areas to probe in this guide and you are not necessarily expected to cover everything. You will need to be reflexive and make decisions about what to prioritise based on the survey responses and what the participant is interested in discussing.

Introduction

- Introduction to researcher, study topic and funder
- Explanation of the aims and objectives of the study
- Explain confidentiality and anonymity
- Explain recording, length (30 mins) and nature of questions
- Reiterate consent from points (participant should have already emailed consent in advance of the interview) – Have a copy to refer to
- Check whether they have any questions
- Check they are happy to continue.

START RECORDING – clearly state date and school code (see interview spread sheet).

1. Background
Aims: To get participant talking and to expand on and confirm school characteristics/policies around parental engagement from the survey.

a. School characteristics (region, type of school, phase, location, Ofsted rating, deprivation, others of interest?) This is an opportunity to check whether there have been recent changes to school demographics e.g. academy converter, increased FSM%, recent OFSTED and what this picked up.
b. Responsibility for parental engagement – the tension between it being the responsibility of all staff but also having someone dedicated to driving the agenda in the school.
c. School policy – Need to probe whether this is about parent conduct i.e. telling parents what to do/how to behave or actually about supporting parent engagement in learning.

2. Current practice of the school and decision making process
Aims: To assess perception of parental engagement in learning in their school and understand what the school is/has done to support parental engagement and why decisions regarding choice of activities/programmes/policies were made
Refer to survey data and probe in relation to the 8 areas below.

a. How do you rate parent engagement in learning in your school

b. What activities and programmes are they running – ask them to expand on their choices in the survey.
    i. Ask about why they do these types of activity (e.g. inherited, prioritising, pupil management, evidence-based, parent champions, recommended by other head teachers, other schools doing, resources lacking or available)
    ii. Have they done things in the past that they no longer do? If so, why did they stop doing them? Did they consider doing things but decided against them and if so, why?
    iii. Do you focus specifically on socially and economically deprived children?

c. Ask them to expand on their overall aims (and prioritization) for doing the activities they do.
    i. Why are these important?
d. What influences the choice of methods you use? (e.g. SES, SEN, behaviour)

3. Building trusting and supportive relationships with parents

Aims: To understand whether schools focus on this and whether they see this as the foundation for parental engagement in learning

a. Holistic approaches to improve parental engagement by building trusting and supportive relationships from the outset rather than just to improve attainment - what, how and when

4. What works well/not so well in supporting parents' engagement

Aims: To understand what might work in practice in particular school contexts

a. What type, what methods works well / not so well, and why
b. How is this known i.e. what evaluation/monitoring, what outcome, what result in relation to parental engagement in learning, attainment or associated outcomes (notably learning and behaviour).

5. Challenges/barriers for schools when trying to support parents engagement in children's learning

Aims: to understand the challenges/barriers to supporting parents to engage in their children's learning

a. Family level factors affecting parental engagement/attainment (e.g. SES, parent level of education, motivation and aspirations, self-efficacy, time, priority, age, gender, ethnicity)
b. School level factors affecting parental engagement/attainment (e.g. staff capacity/ability/interest, money, culture, priority)

6. Support, input or resources to help school support parents' engagement in learning

Aims: To understand what schools feel would help them in supporting parents

a. School focused support (e.g. more support staff, better IT, funding for teacher training)
b. Community focused support (e.g. support from community groups, community family mentors)
c. Other e.g. training in parental engagement at degree/PGCE

7. In conclusion

Aim: To reiterate confidentiality and data reporting and storage

- Thank participant for their time and reiterate confidentiality, data reporting and storage. Tell them that they are welcome to contact Nick Axford (Study PI) to ask questions at a later date.

All recordings and written notes based on the interviews will be stored in a password-protected folder in the PenCLAHRC Projects folder on a shared drive (access to this also requires permission). No identifying information will be included in the written notes or audio recordings (or associated file names) i.e. we will use an anonymised identifier. A separate file will contain identifying information (i.e. linking anonymised identifier to name).

END RECORDING